

# **Estuary English in Norfampton?**

Phonological variation and change in Northampton English

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## **Abstract/Kurzbeschreibung**

Die hier vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit Sprachvariation und Sprachwandel in Northampton, Vereinigtes Königreich. Der Akzent dieser Region wurde bisher wenig erforscht, und es fehlen empirische Studien über Veränderungen in den letzten Jahrzehnten. Gleichzeitig mehren sich die Behauptungen, dass eine angeblich neue Aussprachevarietät namens Estuary Englisch vom Südosten des Landes Richtung Norden zieht. Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es daher, sowohl Aufschluss über sprachliche Veränderungen in Northampton zu geben als auch zu der Diskussion über eine geografische Ausdehnung von Estuary Englisch beizutragen. Die grundlegende Annahme ist, dass eine Massenumsiedlung von Londonern in den 70er Jahren eine Akzentvermischung von London Englisch und dem traditionellen Northampton Akzent zur Folge hatte und Merkmale insbesondere in der Sprache der heute jungen Erwachsenen zu finden sein werden. Die hier vorliegende Arbeit bezieht sich dabei ausschließlich auf phonologische Variation bei Konsonanten.

Die Datenerhebung erfolgte durch soziolinguistische Interviews von insgesamt 14 Sprechern aus drei verschiedenen Generationen. Alle Interviews wurden auditorisch ausgewertet und anschließend quantifiziert. Die quantitative Analyse der Daten bestätigt die Hypothese, dass die untersuchten Merkmale in der Sprache der jüngsten Generation am ausgeprägtesten sind, jedoch scheinen die charakteristischen Estuary Englisch Merkmale schon deutlich vor 1970 in Northampton eingeführt worden zu sein. Nach dieser Zeit wurden lediglich zwei neue Varianten gefunden, die eher dem Cockney Akzent zugeordnet werden. Signifikante ‘gender’ Unterschiede konnten bei den am stärksten stigmatisierten Merkmalen nachgewiesen werden, welche tendenziell von den männlichen Sprechern bevorzugt wurden.

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## **Abbreviations**

EE     Estuary English

RP     Received Pronunciation

SED   Survey of English Dialects

IPA    International Phonetic Alphabet

NSD   Norwegian Social Science Data Services

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Aim and scope

‘If any of you have read any British newspaper regularly or listened to British radio over the past two or three years, there is a good chance that you have come across the term Estuary English’ (Maidment 1994:1). This statement by Maidment, ten years after David Rosewarne had described *Estuary English* (henceforth also EE) as ‘a variety of modified regional speech’ (1984), reflects the steadily growing topicality of this allegedly new variety. Since the phenomenon was introduced for the first time in a comment in the *Times Educational Supplement*, features associated with EE have been reported to be spreading rapidly across south-east England and even beyond.

The purpose of the present sociolinguistic research project is therefore twofold. On the one hand, it aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion about the geographical spread of Estuary English. Simultaneously, it attempts to provide linguistic data of a region that has traditionally not been given as much attention as other areas of England. The focus of this investigation will lie on the five consonantal features L Vocalisation, Yod Coalescence, intervocalic T Glottalling word-finally and word-medially, TH Fronting, and H Dropping. While the former three variables are commonly associated with Estuary English, intervocalic T Glottalling in word-medial position and TH Fronting are generally still seen as boundary markers between EE and the Cockney accent, though they have recently been spreading across the whole country. The last variable investigated in this study is H Dropping, a non-standard feature of the traditional Northampton accent, which is expected decrease as social mobility of the informants increases. Estuary English speakers are generally expected to avoid this working-class feature.

The accent spoken in and around Northampton has rarely been investigated, and there are, to my knowledge, no recent empirical studies available from that area. The only systematic investigation is *The Survey of English Dialects* (SED), conducted in the 1950s. Some rather vague claims for a geographical spread of Estuary English into that region have been made by David Rosewarne himself (1994), as well as by Paul Coggle (1993) and Peter Trudgill (1993).<sup>1</sup> They all indicate that parts of Northamptonshire have already been affected by the rapid spread of EE, though they do not provide empirical evidence for their claims. Trudgill even predicts that the accent of the area to which Northampton belongs to will sooner or later ‘disappear in

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<sup>1</sup> A more detailed description of their claims can be found in section 2.2.2.

the face of continuing expansion of the Home Counties area based on London' (2000:84). Furthermore, he roughly allocates Northamptonshire to the Central East area of England and writes the following:

This dialect area is probably one of the least known of all English dialect areas in the sense that few English people have preconceived ideas or stereotypes of what the dialect is like. This is probably because this dialect is the most innovative of all [...] (Trudgill 2000:45-46).

This citation provides one explanation for the lack of interest in the Northampton accent. Furthermore, it may be seen as a first indicator for an openness of Northampton speakers towards new varieties, and it is one of the main motivations behind this investigation.

In order to find out about a possible change in progress, I conducted a small-scale sociophonetic survey on three generations of Northampton-born families. Every language undergoes changes over time due to the influence of social and individual factors on the users, and each generation thereby reflects characteristic linguistic features of a specific period. In this study, the youngest generation, being primarily students of the local university, is also considered to be the most socially mobile age group.

## **1.2 Research question and hypotheses**

The research question resulting from the above claims is whether features associated with EE have geographically spread to Northamptonshire, and whether the traditional Northampton accent has changed in a direction associated with Estuary English. Furthermore, this thesis is based on two hypotheses:

1. In the early 1970s, Northampton was designated a new town and experienced a great influx of overspill Londoners who moved out of the overcrowded metropolis. This has led to increased face-to-face contact between the local population and speakers of London English. The assumption is therefore that features of EE have spread to Northampton due to accent levelling in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
2. Since EE is considered a middle-class accent that has only recently been spreading out of London and its surrounding counties, the underlying hypothesis is that these features are then most present in the speech of the youngest informants.

### **1.3 The structure**

Having introduced the topic above and given a short summary of the chapters' contents here, the next chapter presents an overview of the theoretical background relevant for this investigation. The chapter is divided into three main sections, of which the first is concerned with the sociolinguistic concepts of gender, apparent-time, and accent levelling. The second section provides a description of Estuary English as well as claims about its geographical spread, while the last part includes both a short introduction to the history of Northampton as well as a general account of the area's traditional accent. Additionally, section 2.3.3 gives a brief overview of the Survey of English Dialects.

The subsequent third chapter is split into two main parts, covering both the phonological variables under investigation, along with their characteristics and their importance for the discussion of Estuary English (3.1), and the methods used to obtain the data for this study (3.2). The latter section provides information about the sampling as well as a description of the interviews and the procedures of the analysis.

Chapter 4 presents the quantified data gathered through the interviews. The variables are dealt with individually, each section giving an account of the number of tokens, the group scores, and the individual scores. While the former are useful for generalisations about the speech of a community under investigation, they conceal variation within the group. Graphs for the individual speakers allow for more detailed information about both gender and individual preferences.

The following chapter aims at bringing together the quantified data presented in chapter 4 and the information achieved from the theoretical review outlined in chapter 2. The results are discussed in relation to both apparent-time, accent levelling, and gender. Section 5.4 is, additionally, concerned with the speech of one third-generation informant who shows some interesting characteristics in relation to the other young informants.

The conclusion sums up the previous chapters and answers both the research question and the hypotheses described above. It further comments on shortcomings in this thesis (6.1) and provides some proposals for further research (6.2).

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A change tends to sneak quietly into a language, like a seed, which enters the soil and germinates unseen. At some point it sprouts through the surface.

(Jean Aitchison, quoted in Mesthrie & Deumert 2000:115)

### 2.1 Sociolinguistic framework

The term sociolinguistics refers to ‘the study of language in relation to society’ (Hudson 1996:1), and was introduced for the first time by the poet and philosopher Haver Currie in 1952 (Coulmas 1997:1). Early sociolinguistic studies were carried out at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century already, but the interest in sociolinguistics has only increased since the late 1960s. The field of sociolinguistic research consists of several branches, each investigating the relationship between society and language from different angles. They all have in common that they base their work on observations rather than introspection (Johnstone 2000:1). One branch of sociolinguistics is the *variationist tradition* that follows the research methods pioneered by William Labov. It refers to the study of language in use, and the focus lies on ‘describing and explaining the distribution of variables’ (Meyerhoff 2006:297). Variationists are mainly concerned with quantitative methods, and typically base their analysis on data that have been gathered in interviews. They advance the view that ‘a language system that did not display variability would not only be imaginary but also dysfunctional’ (Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog, cited in Milroy & Gordon 2003:4).

Social variables relevant for the study of language variation and change are, for example, social class, social mobility, gender, ethnicity, and age. The present investigation is a sociolinguistic project carried out within the variationist paradigm. The subsequent three sections will describe some sociolinguistic factors important for this study.

#### 2.1.2 Gender

One of the above-mentioned social variables is gender, a complex concept that will briefly be outlined here. Gender is not the main factor investigated here, but will be commented on where appropriate.

In sociolinguistics, gender does not simply refer to the biological sex of the speaker, but rather to ‘a social identity that emerges or is constructed through social actions’

(Meyerhoff 2006:201). A male speaker, for example, may prefer one variant over another because he wishes to express his masculinity, rather than because he is a man (Meyerhoff 2006:206). Generalisations about the speech behaviour of male and female speakers in a speech community may therefore help to explain changes in progress (Meyerhoff 2006:207). Labov established two main criteria for the study of linguistic differences between men and women:

- I. In stable sociolinguistic stratification, men use a higher frequency of non-standard forms than women.
- II. In the majority of linguistic changes, women use a higher frequency of the incoming forms than men (Labov 1990:205-206).

Another theory is that women do not simply prefer prestige variants, but rather create them. They tend to prefer supra-local variants such as the glottalisation of (t), the standard fricative pronunciation of (th) and (dh) (Milroy & Gordon 2003:103), or the fronting of back vowels in Southern British English (Meyerhoff 2006:214). Fabricius, for example, concludes from her own data that in modern Received Pronunciation (RP) word-final pre-vocalic T Glottalling has lost its stigma, but has not yet acquired prestige, as the change is not led by her female subjects (2000:145). Men, in contrast, seem to associate working-class features with ‘roughness’ and ‘toughness’ (Trudgill 1998:23), and Trudgill found that, at least in Norwich, working-class speech has ‘covert-prestige’ (1998:27). Labov, however, notes that ‘the sex differential that develops across the social spectrum is [...] a quantitative, not a qualitative difference between men and women’ (1990:244).

### **2.1.3 Apparent-time studies**

Limited access to historical data often makes it difficult for sociolinguists to reconstruct language change in a speech community. With the help of so-called *apparent-time* studies, sociolinguists have found a method for making inferences of a language change in progress without exclusively depending on real-time data. Eckert explains that ‘age stratification of linguistic variables [...] can reflect change in the speech of the community as it moves through time (*historical change*), and in the speech of the individual as he or she moves through life (*age grading*)’ (1997:151, original emphasis). For the purpose of an apparent-time study, the

speech community under investigation is divided into different age groups and frequencies of a variant are measured in the speech of different generations. Meyerhoff emphasises that ‘the apparent time construct relies on the assumption that speakers only minimally change the way they speak after the critical period or in adulthood’ (2006:127). The term critical period refers to a speaker’s childhood or early adolescence. During this time span, a child normally acquires a language without any difficulties, and it is unlikely that any exposure to another language after this period will lead to a ‘native-like’ variety (Meyerhoff 2006:133). Consequently, an apparent-time study of a sample of 80-year-old and 55-year-old speakers allows for generalisations about the community’s speech about 65 and 40 years ago respectively. Chambers describes this period as ‘formative years’ and extends this period from the age of eight to the age of 18 (2002:368). In general, where older age groups show low frequency of a variant while younger groups show increasingly greater frequency, it can be assumed that a real-time linguistic change is going on.

Eckert (1997) points out that an apparent-time study alone is not enough to find out whether or not age-stratified patterns of variation actually indicate a change in progress in a speech community under investigation. She rather alludes to the fact that a speaker might simply become more conservative over the years. For this reason, she recommends a simultaneous comparison with real-time data from earlier recordings. These real-time data should be comparable to the apparent-time data gathered in one’s own investigation, i.e. the communities and the speaker samples across and within the communities should be as similar to the apparent-time data as possible (1997:152-153).

The real-time data from the Survey of English Dialects used in this investigation reflect the speech of 80-year-old men from a rural community in the late 1950s. Although the SED informants’ age resembles the first-generation speakers’ age of this study, they do not come from exactly the same community. The speakers of this investigation come from both the town centre and a radius of 12 miles around Northampton. Furthermore, the younger generations are considered to be socially mobile. A comparison with the SED material may thus be disadvantageous, but it is the only empirical study available on the traditional speech of that area. In cases where the two youngest generation informants used a variant that was not recorded in the SED, and simultaneously was not used by the oldest generation, it can at least be assumed that this variant was introduced into Northampton speech after the 1950s. Since Northampton is a new town having experienced an influx of overspill Londoners in the 1970s, these variants are expected to be London-based features.

### 2.1.4 Accent levelling

One explanation for a linguistic change within a speech community can be sought in the concept of *accent levelling*, which results from language contact. Williams and Kerswill describe levelling as ‘a process whereby differences between regional varieties are reduced, features which make varieties distinctive disappear, and new features emerge and are adopted by speakers over a wide geographical area (1999:149). Kerswill (2003) further notes that *regional dialect levelling* is the outcome of *accommodation* and *geographical diffusion*. Geographical diffusion describes the process in which features spread out from economically and culturally dominant centres to the surrounding area in a wave-like movement. Hereby, towns and cities are usually the first to adopt the new features, followed by the rural areas. Speakers who adopt these new variants are in face-to-face contact with speakers who already have the variant internalised into their speech (Kerswill 2003:221). Speech accommodation refers to a process in which speakers of different regional and social backgrounds accommodate their linguistic behaviour to that of their interlocutors. Accommodation is observable in all aspects of language structure, but it is especially evident in accents (Crystal 1995:298). Speakers generally accommodate other speakers who they perceive as socially attractive, and Trudgill points out that geographical diffusion that results from accommodation can only lead to language change as long as enough individuals are involved (1986:42).

Today, a growing social and geographical mobility has led to an increase of contact between individuals and, consequently, to a spread of phonological features across a wide area. The result is a decrease of local varieties in favour of more levelled ones. In their work *Urban voices: Accent studies in the British Isles*, Foulkes and Docherty present recent studies that have revealed an increasing orientation towards non-standard forms, often rooted in the south-east of England. The editors state that speakers thus try to balance between signalling loyalty to their local community and the wish to appear more modern or ‘cosmopolitan’ (Foulkes and Docherty 1999:13).

One such levelled variety that has caught people’s attention in recent years is Estuary English. According to Rosewarne, EE speakers may ‘cause their original accents to converge until they meet in the middle ground’ and thus adapt to a new environment without giving up their ‘original linguistic identity’ (1984). They abandon their local variants in favour of more supra-local ones. Coggle comments that EE is especially attractive for so many speakers because it is high on ‘street cred’ and sounds more urban rather than rural (1993:26).



Recent examples of the spread of traditional London features are, for example, T Glottalling and TH Fronting. T Glottalling involves the realisation of /t/ as a glottal stop [ʔ]. This feature has been present in London and Glasgow for at least 150 years (Kerswill 2000:4), and is now spreading rapidly into other accents across Britain. Williams and Kerswill (1999:141-162), for example, found intervocalic T Glottalling in the remote city of Hull, Yorkshire. Wells states that the glottal stop is now accepted in Received Pronunciation before consonants, as in *Gatwick* ['gæʔwɪk] and *football* ['fʊʔbɔ:l]. Among younger RP speakers it may even be heard word-finally – *let's start* [leʔs stɑ:ʔ] – or in word-final intervocalic position as in *pick it up* [pɪk ɪʔ ʌp] (1994b:201). TH Fronting is considered a London working-class feature which refers to the replacement of the dental fricatives [θ] and [ð] in words such as *think* and *brother* by the labio-dental fricatives [f] and [v] respectively. Stuart-Smith, Timmins, and Tweedie (2007), for example, found TH Fronting as far away from London as Glasgow, Scotland. It has furthermore been observed in Milton Keynes, Reading, Hull, Newcastle, and Derby (Foulkes and Docherty 1999:11) as well as in Norwich (Trudgill 2002). These features not only spread geographically, but also socially. In her article *Estuary English: Is English Going Cockney?*, Altendorf refers to her empirical study of 'phonological and "attitudinal" variables of EE', and concludes that both prelateral T Glottalling as well as TH Fronting are increasingly used by middle-class speakers and are thus also entering Estuary English (1999:3).

In contrast to these widespread consonantal features, vowels tend instead to be subject to regional dialect levelling, often in the near vicinity of a big city (Kerswill 2000:6). Altendorf reports that fronted variants [ʊ: ~ ʏ:] / [ɪ: ~ i:] in the lexical set GOOSE have, for example, evolved both in London and other south-eastern areas such as Essex, Kent, Milton Keynes, and Reading (2003:112). She furthermore explains that GOOSE Fronting seems to be regarded as a more modern and 'trendy' variant (2003:155-156). Watt found levelling of the Tyneside (Newcastle) vowels FACE and GOAT towards a 'putative regional standard' (2002:44). The speakers of his sample abandoned the local variants [ɪə] and [ʊə] in favour of the more supra-local variants [e:] and [o:] respectively.

The increase of levelling seems to be closely connected to changes in both Britain's social and demographic structure, where a growing social and geographical mobility leads to a loosening of people's *social networks* (Foulkes and Docherty 1999:14). The concept of social networks was developed by Lesley Milroy, who used it as a speaker variable in her Belfast inner-city study (Milroy & Milroy 1997:59). She defines a social network as the 'sum of

relationships' an individual has with others. In her Belfast study people with close-knit social networks, in which almost everybody knows everyone, typically used more vernacular and local variants than speakers with more loose networks (1987:105-106).

Kerswill further points out that regional dialect levelling resulting from geographical diffusion and accommodation is only possible in highly mobile communities within a relatively compact area such as a new town (2003:239). This is also the case for Northampton, which was designated a new town in 1968, and which has developed into a commuter town for people working in London.

## **2.2 Estuary English**

The following section gives an account of previous attempts to describe (or define) Estuary English. Ever since Rosewarne first introduced the term in a comment in the *Times Educational Supplement*, it has generated strong and often negative reactions. In the beginning, it was mainly the media and some speech-conscious individuals that reacted to the discussion, until in the 1990s also linguists started investigating Rosewarne's claims. Since these earliest efforts of grasping the phenomenon of Estuary English, several scholars have contributed to an ongoing discourse. Many of these contributions have been published as shorter articles and are collected on a website created by John C. Wells at the University College London (<http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/estuary/>). Other contributions are empirical sociolinguistic studies, each approaching the notion of EE from a different perspective. Altendorf (2003), for example, sought an empirically based description of Estuary English and found that it consists of a group of core variants that either belong to 'two interrelated social and regional south-eastern accent continua', or that provide 'a pool of features' mainly used by non-native speakers of Estuary English (2003:159-160). Her data also confirm the general claim that Estuary English is predominantly a middle-class accent. Przedlacka (2002) examined the speech of adolescents in Buckinghamshire, Essex, Kent, and Surrey. She reports about 'a lack of uniformity' between these counties, and further found that social class did not prove 'a good indicator of change' either (2002:93). Haenni (1999), in his investigation on how Estuary English is perceived by the public, found that people have no concrete idea of this phenomenon and rather associate it with urban working-class speech than with a middle-class accent. He concludes that '[i]t is thus very difficult to uphold the notion of EE as a distinct variety in its own right' (1999:119).

### 2.2.1 Describing EE

The term Estuary English was first introduced by David Rosewarne in his pioneering article *Estuary English*, published in the *Times Educational Supplement* on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1984. His purpose was to explain an apparently new variety of English centred on the Thames estuary. Since then, EE has been highly discussed by both the layman, professional linguists, as well as the media. The latter often use the term interchangeably with the Cockney accent of East London working-class speakers.<sup>2</sup> While the notion of Estuary English is often considered to be relatively ‘new’ in the history of linguistic change, Wells states that the influence of London speech on English accents has in fact been present for the last 500 years (1997b). Cockney is the broadest form of London speech, and despite its traditional stigmatisation, Wells believes it to be ‘the most influential source of phonological innovation in England and perhaps in the whole of the English-speaking world’ (1982:301). Also Kerswill disclaims EE to be a new variety. He rather sees it as the outcome of previous processes of levelling (2000:10).

The difficulty with EE seems to lie in the question of whether it is a distinct linguistic entity at all. Wells suggests that it may be a ‘formal style/register for which Cockney is the informal one’ (1994:2), but he also reminds us that ‘[EE] is a construct, a term, and we can define it to mean whatever we think appropriate’ (1998-2000). The discussion about Estuary English is additionally complicated by the fact that there is no common agreement over which features are to be considered characteristic of the variety. Rosewarne himself describes EE as:

[...] a variety of modified regional speech. It is a mixture of non-regional and local south-eastern English pronunciation and intonation. If one imagines a continuum with RP and London speech at either end, “Estuary English” speakers are to be found grouped in the middle ground (Rosewarne 1984).<sup>3</sup>

An EE speaker is, according to Rosewarne (1984), characterised by using L Vocalisation, glottalisation of /t/ and /d/, Yod Dropping, and *happy* Tensing. Furthermore, he claims that ‘[t]he intonation of “Estuary English” is characterised by frequent prominence being given to prepositions and auxiliary verbs which are not normally stressed in General RP’ and that EE makes greater use of *tag questions* such as *isn’t it* and *don’t I* (1984). In 1994, he also refers to the use of specific vocabulary such as *Cheers* for *thank you* or *Good bye* (1994a:6). The latter claim classifies EE as a dialect rather than an accent. While *accents* exclusively refer to

<sup>2</sup> The stereotypical Cockney speaker is supposed to be born within the sounds of the legendary Bow Bell.

<sup>3</sup> Wells (1994a) explains that what Rosewarne here titles ‘London speech’ is better classified as the Cockney accent.

phonetic and phonological differences between two or more varieties, *dialects* also distinguish between grammatical and lexical features (Chambers & Trudgill 1998:5).

Coggle (1993) basically agrees with Rosewarne's description of Estuary English, but also his classification of EE as an accent is rather inconsistent. Although he states that it 'first and foremost' is an accent (1993:59), he gives several examples that contradict his statement. He, for example, lists the grammatical features *double negatives* and *tag questions*, the use of the third-person singular form *was* instead of the plural form *were*, as well as several vocabulary items such as *Cheers* and *Mate* (1993:59-68). Coggle also points to the fact that some speakers may be closer to the RP end, and thus use fewer features associated with EE, while others may be closer to the Cockney end and use respectively more features (1993:30). An EE speaker may, for example, use more glottal stops than an RP speaker, but fewer than a speaker of the Cockney accent. Coggle and Rosewarne are accompanied by Crystal, who sees Estuary English as a variety 'distinctive as a dialect not just as an accent' due to its use of syntactic features such as tag questions and double negatives (1995:327). Maidment (1994:5-6) criticises Rosewarne for mixing up accent and dialect features, and for giving the impression that EE can be distinguished from RP and Cockney by rigid boundaries as illustrated below:

**[Cockney][EE][RP]**

According to this illustration, a speaker could clearly be identified as either a Cockney, an EE, or an RP speaker. In reality, however, the boundaries are much more continuous, and Maidment rather proposes the following model:

[I <---Cockney---> F][I <---RP---> F]  
[I <---EE---> F]

Here, (I) refers to informal, and (F) to formal styles, which every speaker of every accent can vary between (Maidment 1994:6). Maidment further concludes that the use of different styles and registers, and the blurred boundaries between the accents involved, make it difficult to determine whether only parts of someone's speech belong to EE, or whether someone is an EE speaker in general. With reference to William and Kerswill's Milton Keynes study, he suggests that it is quite acceptable today to 'pick up and mix accents' and proposes calling this variety *Post-Modern English* rather than Estuary English (1994:6-7).

Wells describes EE as '[s]tandard English spoken with the accent of the southeast of England', which is associated with the lower-middle class having access to higher education

(1998-2000). The social group described here is comparable to the youngest generation in the sample of this investigation. Wells is an internationally acknowledged phonetician who has discussed the concept of EE quite frequently during recent years and this study will follow his definition of Estuary English. According to Wells (1992, 1994a), EE is characterised by the phonetic features outlined in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Features associated with EE according to Wells (1992, 1994a)

Features in which EE agrees with Cockney	Features in which EE differs from Cockney
L Vocalisation	No H Dropping
Yod Coalescence	No TH Fronting
T Glottalling word-finally	No intervocalic T Glottalling word-medially
Diphthong shift in FACE, PRICE, GOAT	No monophthongisation in MOUTH
GOAT Allophony	
<i>happy</i> Tensing	

1. The term L Vocalisation refers to the realisation of pre-consonantal or pre-pausal /l/ as a back rounded vowel [ʊ].
2. Yod Coalescence refers to the assimilation of the alveolar plosives /t/ and /d/ plus a palatal approximant /j/ to the palato-alveolar affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ respectively. In RP, this is frequently found in unstressed syllables as in *nature* ['neɪtʃə] and *picture* ['pɪktʃə], or across word-boundaries as in *would you* ['wʊdʒu]. EE speakers typically use Yod Coalescence in stressed syllables as in *Tuesday* ['tʃu:zdeɪ] or *duke* ['dʒu:k].
3. T Glottalling involves the replacement of /t/ by a voiceless glottal stop [ʔ]. It is generally characterised as a Cockney feature, but in word-final position it has already entered RP (Wells 1994b:201).

4. H Dropping refers to the loss of /h/ in lexical words such as *house* /aus/ and *hill* /ɪɫ/. It is a socially stigmatised feature and is one of the main features that distinguish non-standard varieties from RP.

5. TH Fronting refers to the labiodental realisation [f] and [v] for [θ] and [ð] respectively. This leads to the pronunciation of *think* as [fɪŋk] and *father* as [fɑ:və]. Although TH Fronting is traditionally a stigmatised feature typical for south-eastern pronunciation, it has recently been recorded in other accent areas outside the south-east (see also section 2.1.4).

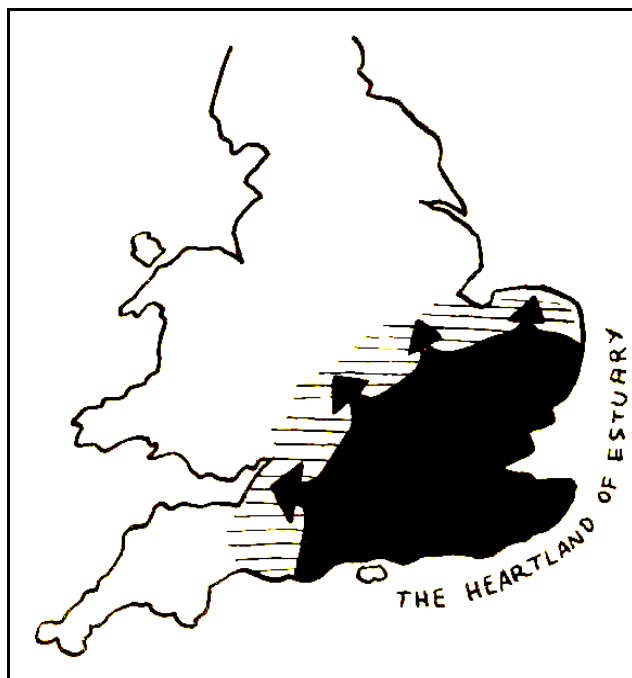
6. London vowels characteristically have a diphthong shift in the lexical sets FACE, GOAT, and PRICE, from RP [eɪ,əʊ,aɪ] towards [æɪ,ʌʊ,aɪ] respectively, as well as GOAT Allophony before /l/. Here, a back-closing diphthong with a mid-central unrounded starting point [əʊ] is realised as [ɒʊ], with a back rounded starting point in words such as *goal* [gɒʊɫ] and *shoulder* [ʃɒʊldə] (cf. Wells 1992, 1994a, Cruttenden 2008:87). A further aspect associated with EE is *happy* Tensing, where the final vowel [ɪ] in *happy*, *very*, etc. is now often realised as a long close front unrounded [i:] (Rosewarne 1994b:5, Wells 1992). Already in 1982, Wells indicated that the tensing of /ɪ/ is increasing also among RP speakers (1982:294). The last variable that distinguishes EE from Cockney is the so-called MOUTH monophthongisation. It refers to the use of a long open front unrounded monophthong [æ:] instead of a diphthong [aʊ] in words belonging to the lexical set MOUTH. Another feature often associated with south-eastern English, though not listed in Table 2.1, is the fronting of the back close rounded vowel [u:] in the lexical set GOOSE. Here, Wells suggests the phonetic symbol [ɤ:] (1994a), while Rosewarne proposes a diphthongal variant [əʊ] for the south-eastern pronunciation (1994b:5).

As indicated in Table 2.1, some of these phonetic features are closer to the Cockney end, while others are similar to RP features. TH Fronting, H Dropping, intervocalic T Glottalling, and MOUTH monophthongisation are commonly considered Cockney features. The variables investigated in this study are described in more detail in chapter 3.

### 2.2.2 Claims on the geographical spread of EE

Geographical factors seem to be an important criterion for the spread of Estuary English. It has been mentioned above that the term itself refers to the estuary of the River Thames, which indicates that the first speakers of this variety must have come from the adjacent counties. Today, EE is supposed to be spoken in both London and the Home Counties, and there are

claims in the literature that this area is expanding. Coggle, for example, explains that EE ‘spreads outwards until it reaches either a coastal boundary or another major dialect hurdle’ (1993:26).



Map 1: The spread of EE according to Coggle (1993:28).

As illustrated in the map above, Coggle claims that EE covers all of England’s south-east, from the Norfolk coast in the north-east along the coastal south-east and south. In the inland, EE is supposed to extend as far as ‘beyond the northern boundaries of Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire’, where it meets the ‘*bath* and *love* boundary’ (Coggle 1993:26-27). Coggle’s account of the geographical spread of EE is supported by Rosewarne’s statement that ‘it is now spoken south of a line from the Wash to the Avon (1994a:4). Trudgill, despite claiming that EE will ever become anything more than a regional accent, admits that this region might eventually cover the ‘Home Counties plus, probably, Sussex, Hampshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and parts of Northamptonshire’ (2002:178). In addition to the features clearly associated with Estuary English, also other London consonant features, such as TH Fronting and intervocalic T Glottalling, are reported to be spreading across south-east England and even beyond at the moment (see 2.1.4).

### 2.2.3 Estuary English as a result of geographical and social mobility

The geographical spread of EE is generally seen as a result of people moving out of London (cf. e.g. Coggle 1993:24, Rosewarne 1994a:4). During World War II, many people living in the capital were evacuated into the countryside and, afterwards, postwar building programmes and the establishment of new towns led to a systematic movement of Londoners out of the city and into the surrounding area (see also 2.3.1). These people brought their accents with them into the new environment, and Crystal states that their ‘numerical presence (as well as their economic standing) may even have influenced the original residents to accommodate in their direction’ (1995:327).<sup>4</sup>

Rosewarne further claims that EE is appealing to many because it ‘obscures sociolinguistic origins’ (1984) and reflects widespread changes in Britain’s social structure. It is especially attractive to those who are socially mobile, both upwardly and downwardly. These speakers, according to Rosewarne, often try to find a linguistic compromise between their old and new situations (ibid.).

Cruttenden classifies Estuary English as *London Regional RP*. Regional RP, in general, refers to speech that is RP, but which has included some regional features. He states that it therefore reflects regional rather than class variation and that London Regional RP then is ‘a modification of RP towards Cockney (Cruttenden 2008:78-79).

## 2.3 Northampton

The idea of new towns is not new. Philosophers throughout the ages have condemned the living conditions of their time and with reforming zeal have described the society of their dreams – the perfect state, the perfect city, the perfect system or government.

Frank Schaffer (1970:1)

The following section gives a brief account of Northampton’s history with a short outline of the shoemaking era and a focus on the designation as a new town. Further subsections are concerned with the dialect spoken in and around Northampton as well as with the Survey of English Dialects.

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<sup>4</sup> This claim may be supported by an anecdote told by one of the first-generation informants when talking about the Northampton dialect. He told me about an evacuee from the urban district Bow in London, of whose Cockney dialect he was fascinated and from whom he had learned a lot.



### 2.3.1 From a shoemaking community to a new town

Northampton, mentioned for the first time in 914 BC under the name *Ham tune*, lies about 70 miles north-west of London on the River Nene and belongs to England's Midlands region. Its geographical location in the middle of the country made Northampton an important strategic town already during the Norman period (Page, 1930) and a centre for distribution in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite being the capital town of Northamptonshire, Northampton has not yet achieved city status.

Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century the town has been known for shoemaking and leather-crafting. Being an agricultural area with plenty of cattle, and with the River Nene providing the water, Northampton had the resources necessary for tanning leather and supplying it to the local shoemakers. Its geographical position 'enabled a wide distribution network' (BBC Home/Legacies:1), and in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Northampton even supplied the military with boots and shoes (Brown 1990:6). Though the first machines for the manufacturing of shoes were introduced to the Northampton shoemakers in 1857, the production of traditional hand-sewn shoes continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century (BBC Home/Legacies:5) and in 1951 Northampton and its surrounding area produced '80% of all British footwear' (Brown 1990:177). After the war, the town experienced massive changes in its local economic structure. The manufacturing industry was reduced simultaneously to an expansion of the service sector, mainly in distribution (Brown 1990:180). Today, the town is nevertheless still associated with high quality shoes such as *Church* and *Loake*.

In 1968, Northampton was designated a new town under the New Towns Act. The concept of new towns draws on the utopian idea of *Garden Cities* as described by Ebenezer Howard in 1898. Howard imagined an autonomous, self-employed town with a complete social and functional structure somewhere in the countryside. He founded the Garden City Association and established Letchworth Garden City 30 miles north of London in 1902. In 1920, a second Garden City was built in Welwyn, Hertfordshire. As mentioned before, the Garden Cities were highly utopian in character, and did not receive the public attention expected by Howard and his colleagues. The development of today's new towns started instead with the New Towns Act passing through Parliament in 1946 (Schaffer 1970:4-8).

Northampton was a so-called 'Mark III' town, planned to take in people from the south-east region (Brown 1990:184-185). It differed from other new towns in that it was not a small village, but already had 130,000 inhabitants including foreigners and English from across the country at the time of its designation (Brown 1990:186). The government's intention was to

bring in 70,000 incomers by 1981 and, together with the natural birth rate, increase the population from 130,000 to around 260,000 by 1991 (Brown 1990:182). Eventually, Northampton's population reached 157,217 in 1981 (Brown 1990:Appendix I), and around 70% of the immigrants had come from London (Brown 1990:194). Most of them settled in the so-called *Eastern District*, while later, people also started moving to the south of the town (Brown 1990:191). According to the Census 2001, the population had increased to 194,458 by the beginning of the new millennium (Office for National Statistics 2011a).

Parallel to the expansion of the town, Northampton also invested in education programmes. The Northampton Technical College opened in 1924 already and others were soon to follow. In 1972, for example, the College of Education was opened, which three years later was amalgamated with two other colleges to become Nene College. In 1999, it became Nene University College and the University of Northampton in 2005.<sup>5</sup>

### 2.3.2 Northampton speech

Little is known about recent developments in the Northampton accent, so this research project is pioneering in character. With the exception of the Survey of English Dialects there are, to my knowledge, no empirical studies available about the speech of the area in and around Northampton (for a description of the SED see section 2.4 below). For information about the traditional accent I consulted the SED findings from the village of Kislingbury, which lies about five miles west of Northampton town centre.<sup>6</sup> The recordings were conducted in June 1957 by the researcher Stanley Ellis. Where available, generalisations about the variety under investigation were, additionally, gathered from *An Atlas of English Dialects* by Clive Upton and J.D.A Widdowson (2006), who generated dialect maps based on the findings of the SED.

Northampton lies close to the Severn-Wash line, a dialect hurdle that is seen as a dividing line between the linguistic north and the linguistic south. The most prominent features in this area are the lexical sets STRUT and BATH. Speakers of southern accents make a distinction between words belonging to the lexical sets FOOT and STRUT (some linguists also use the term PUT-CUT Split) and typically use a close mid back vowel [ʊ] in words like *foot* and *put* and a mid open unrounded back vowel [ʌ] in words like *cup* and *love*. Speakers of

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.northampton.ac.uk/info/20001/about-us/423/history-of-the-university-of-northampton> accessed 28 April 2011.

<sup>6</sup> To gain information about the traditional Northampton accent I searched the SED material for relevant variables and randomly chose between five and ten tokens per variable. This amount of data was considered sufficient since each variant listed in the SED is based on the speech of three Kislingbury informants.

northern accents in contrast do not have this FOOT-STRUT Split and typically use a close mid back vowel [ʊ] with loose lip rounding in both cases. In BATH words, southerners predominantly use a long open back vowel [ɑ:] in words such as *laugh* and *glass*. Here, northerners usually prefer a short open front vowel [a] (Wells 1982:335).



Map 2: Northern boundaries of the FOOT-STRUT Split (solid line) and BATH Broadening (broken line) (taken from Wells 1982:336).

Map 2 reflects the northern boundaries of the FOOT-STRUT Split and BATH Broadening according to the SED material. The FOOT-STRUT Split is indicated by the solid line, while the broken line marks the northern boundary for BATH Broadening. For the reader's convenience, I have marked the approximate location of Northampton with a cross. As can be seen in this map, Northampton lies in a transition area between the linguistic south and the linguistic north. In the interviews conducted for this study both the northern and the southern variants for STRUT were recognised in the informants' speech.

The traditional Northampton diphthong in the lexical set PRICE starts with an open back unrounded vowel [ɑɪ], where RP has a more fronted vowel [aɪ]. The Northampton variant

[aɪ] is also the one used by speakers of popular London, a less broad variety of London English. The MOUTH diphthong in Northampton traditionally starts with a mid-open front vowel [ɛʊ], where RP uses [aʊ].

Regarding consonants, Northampton has traditionally been an H Dropping and Yod Dropping area. For the latter variable it can be assumed that the loss of [j] in words like *Tuesday*, *tune* and *Duke* is a result of spelling influence (Upton & Widdowson 2006:63). For /l/ in pre-consonantal and word-final position, the SED gives the standard pronunciation of dark [ɫ] as the only variant used among the informants. In words containing word-final and intervocalic /t/, the traditional Northampton pronunciation is the fortis alveolar plosive [t]. With regard to TH Fronting, Upton and Widdowson mention that the RP-like variant [θ, ð] as in *three* and *father* is also the variant used in most non-standard accents across the country, and it is given as the most common choice in Northampton (2006:54-55).

Both Upton & Widdowson and Trudgill (Upton & Widdowson 2006:42, Trudgill 2000:75) indicate that the most western parts of Northamptonshire are tangent to the rhotic west of England. At the same time, Trudgill mentions that the area in which the /r/ in words such as *arm* [a:rm] is pronounced is decreasing every year. He, therefore, predicts that rhoticity in these words will disappear within the next century (2000:82). The SED material describes Northampton as a non-rhotic area.

Table 2.2 below sums up the variables and variants described in this section and provides a general overview of the traditional Northampton accent.

Table 2.2 Variants of the traditional Northampton accent as given by the SED

Variable	Examples from the SED	Variant
STRUT	st <u>u</u> mp, <u>u</u> ncle, dr <u>u</u> nk	[ʌ], [ʊ]
PRICE	<u>e</u> yes, ch <u>i</u> ld, l <u>i</u> ghtning	[aɪ]
MOUTH	c <u>o</u> w, m <u>o</u> uth, tr <u>o</u> users	[εʊ]
BATH	<u>a</u> rm, b <u>a</u> rn, gr <u>a</u> ss	[a:]
(h)	<u>h</u> ouse, <u>h</u> orse, <u>h</u> ungry	Ø
(tj,dj)	<u>T</u> uesday, <u>t</u> une, <u>d</u> ew	[t,d]
(th,dh)	<u>th</u> ree, f <u>ath</u> er, br <u>oth</u> er	[θ,ð]
(l)	apple, un <u>cl</u> e, gir <u>l</u> s	[ɫ]
(r)	worms, Thur <u>s</u> day, a <u>r</u> m	non-rhotic
(t)	bo <u>o</u> t, bu <u>tt</u> er, fo <u>rt</u> y	[t]

In the table above, the left column lists the variables investigated in order to get a picture of the traditional Northampton accent, while the next section gives original examples taken from the SED. The right column describes the traditional variants as recorded in the Survey of English Dialects. The table once again illustrates that the consonant features H Dropping and Yod Dropping as well as the vowels in the lexical sets STRUT, MOUTH and PRICE seem to be the most characteristic ones for the Northampton accent. While STRUT reflects the transition between the North and the South, PRICE has the same vowel as popular London English. (th,dh), (t), as well as the lack of post-vocalic /r/ are identical to Received Pronunciation.

### 2.3.3 The Survey of English Dialects

The most reliable information about the traditional Northampton accent is presented by the Survey of English Dialects. The SED (Orton 1962) is a nationwide sample of vernacular English dialects that was collected between 1950 and 1961 by the Department of English Language and Medieval English Literature at the University of Leeds. The aim of the survey's founders Professor Eugen Dieth from the University of Zürich and Harold Orton from the University of Leeds was the compilation of a linguistic atlas of English, thereby preserving knowledge of disappearing regional dialects. The informants chosen for the survey were so-called NORMs – non-mobile, older, rural males from 311 rural localities across the country.<sup>7</sup> Neither the informants nor the localities for the survey were picked randomly, but were carefully selected according to predefined criteria. The interviews were conducted by nine trained fieldworkers, who interviewed two or three informants per locality. The questionnaire used for the survey contained 1322 questions concerning phonological, morphological, and syntactical variation. The majority of the questions were however related to lexicon. Since the sample mainly consisted of retired agricultural workers, the questionnaire encompassed topics such as *farming, animals, nature, or time and weather*. Furthermore, the informants were shown pictures and diagrams in order to identify the objects to be named. The phonetic documentations of the interviews were on-the-spot transcriptions based on the *International Phonetic Alphabet* (IPA). In 1952, the interviews were for the first time also tape-recorded. This enabled the fieldworkers to record larger stretches of spontaneous speech from the informants (Orton 1962:14-19).

The Survey of English Dialects may serve as a connection between older and more recent research projects. Investigators who compared their real-time data to the SED material of their respective research locations are, for example, Przedlacka (2002) and Altendorf (2003). Przedlacka's study was a replication of the Survey of English Dialects in that she tried to elicit the same tokens from her subjects that had been required from the SED informants about 40 years earlier.

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<sup>7</sup> '[I]n this country men speak the vernacular more frequently, more consistently, and more genuinely than women' (Orton 1962a:15).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This investigation is a synchronic study that examines language variation and change in Northampton, UK, by comparing three generations of Northampton-born speakers at one specific point in time. This apparent-time approach, with age as a social variable, enables the investigator to make inferences about a change in progress. The collected data are additionally compared with previous descriptions of that area, as listed in the Survey of English Dialects. Though the SED's informants are not directly comparable to the subjects of this investigation, they are the only source available for a diachronic comparison.

The following chapter concentrates on a description of the procedures followed throughout the research project. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first section introduces the phonological variables investigated and their respective variants. The second section deals with the procedures of gathering, analysing, and quantifying linguistic data. It gives more detailed information on the preparations of the project and how subjects have been contacted. Furthermore, it describes the conduction of the interviews and explains how the researcher has proceeded in order to convert the amount of recorded speech into quantified data. The aim of the individual interviews was to record as much vernacular speech from speakers of different generations as would be necessary to obtain at least 30 tokens for each variable. The vernacular, according to Labov, is the most suitable style for linguistic analysis (1984:29).

#### **3.1 Phonological variables and their variants**

This section aims to provide a definition of the phonological variables chosen for the analysis of this investigation. It describes the variants assigned to each variable, and gives closer information on where the researcher has drawn the boundaries between the variants. In general, all the variables were treated as binary, that is they either have a traditional Northampton or a London/EE realisation. For all the variables, tokens pronounced too quietly, too quickly, or that were interrupted by laughter or other background noises have not been included in the analysis.

##### **3.1.1 L Vocalisation**

The opinions of what can be considered an Estuary English feature vary among many linguists and laymen. One of the features most commonly agreed upon is L Vocalisation, where non-pre-

vocalic /l/ is not realised as a dark [ɫ], as in RP, but rather as a back rounded vowel [o] or [ʊ]. Thus, the words *milk* and *middle* are pronounced [mɪʊk] and [mɪdʊ] respectively. Rosewarne (1994a:3) additionally gives the semi-vowel [w] as a possible phonetic symbol, a description that is also supported by Coggle (1993:31). However, the exact degree of lip-rounding is difficult to determine (Rosewarne 1994a:3). Wells further draws attention to the fact that the use of [w] for /l/ implies a phonemic identification with pre-vocalic /w/, which is not the case. He rather explains that EE speakers use a vocoid in the area [ɤ,o,ʊ,u] and suggests using a mid-close back round variant [o] for a transcription (1994a:3). Cruttenden proposes the symbol [ʊ] (2008:87), which is also the variant used throughout this study.

While Wells in the early nineties still hesitated to ascribe L Vocalisation to RP, he does indicate that this change is entering RP by 1997 (1994b, 1997a), an observation that is also supported by Coggle and Cruttenden (Coggle 1993:47-49, Cruttenden 2008:78).

The vocalised variant [ʊ] for pre-consonantal /l/ can, according to Gimson, be traced back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and was commonly used by grammarians in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (1989:205). In London, L Vocalisation seems to have been described for the first time by Daniel Jones in his first edition of *The pronunciation of English* in 1909 (cf. Wells 1982:259).

In pre-vocalic position, as in *Luton*, *love*, *like*, /l/ is realised as clear [l] and Wells explains that words originally pronounced with a dark [ɫ] have a clear [l] across word boundaries in which the second word begins with a vowel (1982:258). Tollfree, however, believes that there is a change going on with word-final intervocalic /l/ in London English. She found vocalised variants of /l/ in this environment with her youngest speakers (1999:174). This is supported by Altendorf, who reports that vocalisation of word-final pre-vocalic clear [l] is a low-prestige London variant that seems to be spreading both socially and geographically (2003:97). Vocalisation of clear [l] was in some instances also present in the informants' speech of this study. It seems that [ʊ] may occur before a vowel, but it is less likely in this context. The intervocalic environment of /l/ has in general not been taken into consideration here, though exceptions were made when there was a pause between the two words. In addition, word boundaries in which the second word starts with the phoneme /l/, such as *social life*, have only been counted as instances of L Vocalisation when there was an audible pause between the last syllable of the first word and the first syllable of the second word. Generally, a lack of tongue-tip contact was not considered sufficient to be counted as a variant of



vocalisation in this study. The /l/ must instead be audibly replaced by a back rounded vowel [ʊ]. This is especially difficult to hear in cases where the /l/ is already preceded by another back rounded vowel as in *all*, *call*, *fault* etc. Thus, only those tokens that had an audible glide from one back rounded vowel to the back rounded vowel [ʊ] were included in the analysis.

### 3.1.2 Yod Coalescence

Yod Coalescence has long been a part of the English language and can frequently be found in standard English. It refers to the pronunciation of the alveolar plosives /t/ and /d/ plus a palatal approximant /j/ as the palato-alveolar affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ respectively. In RP, this is traditionally confined to contexts in which /tj/ and /dj/ are followed by a weak vowel as in *soldier* ['səʊldʒə] and *picture* ['pɪktʃə], or across word-boundaries as in *did you* ['dɪdʒu]. Gimson explains that the latter instance can be found in contemporary colloquial speech, but that it may be avoided by some very speech-conscious RP speakers (1989:299-300). In stressed syllables, Yod Coalescence is considered a typical feature of Estuary English and leads to the pronunciation ['stʃu:dənt] for *student* or ['dʃu:n] for *dune*. Rosewarne predicts that /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ may eventually also take over the RP forms /tj/ and /dj/ in this context (1994b:5). This investigation has also included syllables that carry secondary stress, as in *attitude*, as a token of potential Yod Coalescence because there is no possibility for vowel reduction in these positions (Wells 1982:247). Wells, moreover, mentions that Yod Coalescence is also the new variant used by broad Cockney speakers, who traditionally had Yod Dropping in this environment (1982:331).

In this study the variable Yod Coalescence has two realisations, either an Estuary English pronunciation /tʃ,dʒ/ or 'other variants'. The latter variant includes both the traditional Northampton pronunciation /t,d/, where the speakers have Yod Dropping, as well as the standard pronunciation /tj,dj/ and instances of ST Palatalisation [ʃtj] and [ʃtu] in *stu*-clusters. The coalesced variant also includes instances of /tj,dj/ plus strong friction. These tokens have been counted as instances of Yod Coalescence because they represent neither standard pronunciation nor traditional Northampton speech, but instead indicate a change in this context.

### 3.1.3 T Glottalling

T Glottalling refers to the realisation of the alveolar plosive /t/ as a glottal stop [ʔ] and is a feature that has traditionally been stigmatised. Glottalling in intervocalic word-medial position is the most marked environment for (t). It is commonly regarded as a broad London feature, though the exact origin of the glottal stop is not completely certain. Andrézen (1968) tried to trace the emergence of the glottal stop in the literature. The earliest references he found stem from the 1860s, where it is described as a feature of Scottish English. In London, [ʔ] for (t) appears not to have been recorded before the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Andrézen 1968:12-18).

As mentioned in section 2.1.4, T Glottalling is currently spreading out of London and into a wider geographical area. In addition, it is spreading socially into higher social classes, stylistically into more formal contexts, and phonologically into more stigmatised phonetic environments (Trudgill 1999:136). Rosewarne, in his pioneering article *Estuary English*, reports that an EE speaker would be expected to use ‘fewer glottal stops than a “London” speaker, but more than an RP speaker’ (1984). Cruttenden states that T Glottalling is commonly considered an Estuary English feature in pre-consonantal and word-final position, as in *Gatwick* [gæʔwɪk] and *not that* [nɒʔ ˈðæʔ], and increasingly in intervocalic position across word-boundaries, as in *eat ice* [i:ʔ ˈaɪs] (2008:87, see also Wells 1992). Rosewarne, additionally, claims that EE speakers would occasionally also use a glottal stop for /d/ (1994a:5), but this statement has been strongly refuted by, among others, Wells (1992) and Maidment (1994).

Glottal stops can occur in various environments, but this study exclusively looks at intervocalic T Glottalling in both word-medial position, as in *butter* and *water*, and across word-boundaries, as in *sort of* and *quite a*.<sup>8</sup> With the latter context, I have looked at syllable-final /t/ between vowels independent of stress. This includes contexts such as *out in* and *out every day*. In cases where a syllabic lateral approximant /l/ has been subject to L Vocalisation, for example in *little* [lɪtu], this has been considered as an instance of intervocalic /t/ as well. The differentiation between word-internal and word-final intervocalic T Glottalling is intended to give information about the context in which intervocalic T Glottalling first entered Northampton speech. The two variants assigned to the realisation of /t/ are [t] and [ʔ]. Where /t/ is realised as a tap [ɾ] it has been counted as an instance of [t].

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<sup>8</sup> For a complete list of possible environments in which T Glottalling can occur, see Wells, 1982: 260.

### 3.1.4 TH Fronting

TH Fronting refers to the realisation of the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ as labiodental fricatives [f] and [v]. In the literature, TH Fronting was already mentioned as early as 1787, and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century it appears to have spread quite rapidly in London speech (Kerswill 2003:234). TH Fronting is a socially stigmatised feature that is still considered characteristic of the Cockney accent, which makes it less accepted by Estuary English speakers than for example L Vocalisation.

Altendorf, in 1999, found that TH Fronting is now increasingly used by middle class speakers as well, and she assumed that it is therefore also entering EE (1999:3). In 2003, however, she was doubtful as to whether this feature can ever become one of the core variants of Estuary English (Altendorf 2003:152). In a recent comment in the *Times Educational Supplement*, Rosewarne claims that ‘there is some evidence of young EE speakers replacing the voiced and voiceless “th” sounds found in the words “three” and “that” of RP with the more London-style “f” and “v” (2009). In contrast to Rosewarne, many other linguists state that voiced fricatives in initial position are not subject to TH Fronting (see for example Wells 1982:328, Williams & Kerswill, 1999:147 ).

TH Fronting is furthermore one of the consonant features that are currently spreading throughout the country and there appears to be a change going on with this variable also in Northampton. However, since there is no empirical evidence for this observation, this statement is partly based on anecdotal references. For instance, in a private conversation with two younger informants, I was assured that in Northampton a popular pronunciation for the word *three* is [fri:]. The increase of TH Fronting in Northampton was further confirmed by one of the second-generation informants, and in a comment on an online article at BBC Home, a female reader alludes to the pronunciation of *Northampton* as ‘Norfaaamptn’.<sup>9</sup>

Trudgill points out that a change towards TH Fronting is in general not unexpected given the fact that /θ/ and /ð/ are marked, rarely found in other languages, and difficult for children to learn (Trudgill 2002:57). The variable (th,dh) has been included in this investigation due to the personal observations during the conduction of the pilot study and the comments mentioned above. In the analysis, voiced fricatives in initial position are not taken into account. Moreover, the plural forms *clothes* and *months* have not been counted when pronounced with /z/ or /s/ instead of /ðz/ or /θs/.

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<sup>9</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/northamptonshire/content/articles/2005/01/12/linguistic\\_expert\\_int\\_qa.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/northamptonshire/content/articles/2005/01/12/linguistic_expert_int_qa.shtml), accessed 26 February 2011.

### 3.1.5 H Dropping

H Dropping refers to the replacement of the glottal fricative /h/ by zero in stressed syllables word-initially in words such as *home*, *hit*, or *housework*, or word-medially as in *inherently* [ɪnˈherəntli]. Zero pronunciation of /h/ may, in some cases, lead to homophones such as *hear/ear*, *hate/eight*, or *hair/air*. Wells accentuates that H Dropping still is a typical marker of most working-class English accents (1982:253) and has been present in British English for at least two hundred years (1982:255). It is a socially stigmatised feature, and recent studies have interestingly found a trend towards an adoption of [h] in areas where it has traditionally been dropped (cf. e.g. Cheshire et al. 1999, Williams & Kerswill 1999). Upton and Widdowson point out that H Dropping is strongly influenced by the formality of the context and, consequently, the degree of awareness the speakers pay to their speech (2006:59). Since Northampton has traditionally been an h-less area, this study will look at H Dropping as a counter-movement, namely it will examine whether or not the use of /h/ has changed towards a more standard pronunciation among the different generations. Zero pronunciation of /h/ in function words such as *he*, *him*, or *have* is not considered a feature of H Dropping as standard accents regularly lack the pronunciation of [h] when they occur in unstressed position (Wells 1982: 254). In these cases, it might rather be regarded as a result of connected speech processes. Consequently, only function words that carry stress, for example in tag questions, are counted as a token of H Dropping. Instances in which historical h-less pronunciation in unstressed syllables has been restored in today's pronunciation, as in *historical* and *hotel*, are excluded from the analysis as well.

Table 3.1 below sums up the variables and variants described in section 3.1 and provides a general overview of the features investigated in this study. Not all variables are undoubtedly associated with Estuary English, but rather with broad London English. Therefore, the London variants are listed in the table as well.

Table 3.1 Traditional Northampton and London realisations of the variables investigated

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Traditional Northampton variant</b>	<b>EE variant</b>	<b>Broad London variant</b>
L Vocalisation	mi <u>l</u> k, hi <u>ll</u>	[ʌ]	[ʊ]	[ʊ]
Yod Coalescence	<u>t</u> une, <u>d</u> une	‘other variants’, including traditional Northampton forms[t,d], standard pronunciation [tj,dj] and ST Palatalisation [ʃtj] and [ʃtu]	[tʃ,dʒ]	[tʃ,dʒ]
T Glottalling word-finally word-medially	sort <u>t</u> of, butt <u>er</u>	[t] [t]	[ʔ] [t]	[ʔ] [ʔ]
TH Fronting	<u>th</u> ree, rat <u>h</u> er	[θ,ð]	[θ,ð]	[f,v]
H Dropping	<u>h</u> ouse, <u>h</u> ill	Ø	[h]	Ø

In the table above, the columns to the left list the variables investigated in this study, along with respective examples. Each variable has been assigned two variants, either a traditional Northampton variant or an EE/London variant. The section in the middle presents the traditional pronunciation, while the two columns to the right illustrate the Estuary English as well as the broad London variants.

### 3.2 Method

The subsequent sections aim at giving an overview of the procedures involved in a sociolinguistic study such as this one. Starting with general information on preparations, they then provide a description of the informants and the interview, finishing with the process of analysing and quantifying the data obtained.

### 3.2.1 Approach and preparations

In any sociolinguistic study, there are a lot of arrangements to be made prior to the conduction of the interviews. In a first step, this project had to be registered with the *Norwegian Social Science Data Services* (NSD). This procedure is obligatory for every researcher who works with direct or indirect personal information on the informants and is meant to ensure that general data privacy requirements are being fulfilled. This includes giving the informants detailed information about the aim of the study and the data collection process, the assurance of their anonymity, as well as informing them about their rights to withdraw from the study at any time.

In order to come into contact with the informants I used the so-called *snowball* method, where one participant recommends further possible subjects. Unlike other studies, the person to start the snowball method was not a subject herself. She was a student at the University of Northampton and belongs to the family of the investigator. In addition to this approach, an enquiry was posted on the social network service *Facebook*, to which several interested people replied. Eventually, two of them agreed to participate in the interviews. All the subjects were given general information about the investigation and the process of the interview. They were told that they are taking part in a master's thesis about language and language change in Northampton through which the investigator aims to find out whether, and how, language changes among different generations of native speakers. In order to elicit as authentic a speech as possible in this formal interview situation, the subjects were not explicitly told that the study is concerned with their pronunciation.

Before I started the main investigation in September 2010, a small-scale pilot study was carried out in August 2010. The purpose of this study was threefold. First, it was necessary in order to secure data from a family who could not be interviewed at the time of the main research period. Additionally, it was intended to find out whether or not it is possible to get hold of enough families that were willing to participate as well as to rule out possible weaknesses in the structure of the interview. The pilot study consisted of a conversation part, followed by an elicitation task as well as a reading part and focused not only on consonants, but also on vowel features such as GOOSE Fronting and MOUTH Raising. The elicitation task consisted of 24 short questions designed to bring forth one specific token of a variable.

The informants of the pilot study all belonged to three generations of the same family, and the sample consisted of three first-generation speakers (Annie, Hannah, and James), one informant from the second (George), and one informant from the third generation (Harry).

During the conduction of the interviews, I observed several features in the informants' speech that were on the verge of the Cockney accent. Hence, the main data collection also included variables such as intervocalic T Glottalling in word-medial position and TH Fronting.

Furthermore, I made some important observations during the interviews and their analysis, which helped to improve the quality of the interviews during the second period of data collection. In the conversation part, for example, some questions turned out to be more efficient than others in eliciting longer stretches of speech. Minor changes also had to be done in the elicitation task, since individual questions did not bring forth the expected answers. Another fundamental alteration resulting from the experiences in the pilot study was the reduction of initially two interviewers to only one interviewer because the informants often seemed to be confused as to whom they should address. The results of the pilot study are also included in the main data set.

### 3.2.2 Speakers

'Any social scientific study that draws conclusions about a large group when only selected members of that group have been observed must be concerned with representativeness' (Milroy & Gordon 2003:24). In traditional dialectology the established method of securing representativeness and, thus, avoiding bias was to collect the informants according to the principle of *random sampling*. Milroy and Gordon (2003) state that a sample can be considered random as long as every person belonging to the community under investigation could be a possible informant. But even with random sampling, bias is not always completely avoidable. If potential informants, for reasons unknown, cannot be included in the investigation, the avoidance of bias is no longer justified. Today, strict random sampling has given way to the more predefined *judgement sampling*, in which the researcher defines and localises specific speakers prior to the actual investigation. This can be done by selecting speakers according to specific social variables such as age, gender, social class, etc. (2003:25-30).

The informants of this study have been collected according to the principle of *judgement sampling*, and one aspect to be thought of prior to approaching possible speakers was how to define a native speaker of the Northampton accent. Przedlacka, in her Ph.D. thesis on Estuary English, for example included speakers that had either been born in the village she investigated, or that had moved into the locality before the age of six (2002:21). In this study, the main selection criteria for potential subjects was also locality. All the informants had to be

born and raised in Northampton, or in a radius of 15 miles at most and, preferably, had lived in Northampton for several generations.<sup>10</sup> The speakers who grew up furthest away from the town centre came from places to the south and the east of Northampton. Those were also the directions first affected by the town's extension in the early 1970s (cf. Brown 1990:191), and the informants were thus deemed suitable for participation. Similarly, Przedlacka included a speaker who had moved to the locality under investigation at the age of seven, but who had lived within a 15-mile radius before that (2002:21).

Another criterion was age. The youngest speakers were for instance supposed to be around the age of 18 to 20, though one informant was only 17. This decision was made for two reasons. First, at that point in time the speakers have just passed the 'critical period' and their speech can be regarded as settled. Second, in order to work with underage informants, a researcher needs both the parents' permission and a police clearance certificate. This was considered too time-consuming and I decided to work with informants above the age of 18 instead.

The initial idea was to find three to four families with three speakers belonging to different generations, such as grandmother, mother, and daughter. The informants of the pilot study are, however, the only speakers that correspond with these originally set up criteria. Since it turned out to be a difficult undertaking, the idea of exclusively interviewing three generations belonging to one family had to be abandoned after the pilot study. Either parts of the families declined to participate, or they did not correlate with the criteria set up for this study, viz. they had either passed away or did not fit into the preferred age group. In one case, an informant had agreed to participate but did not show up at the time of the interview. Instead, speakers of the different age groups were looked for independently and, eventually, fourteen native speakers of Northampton and the surrounding area took part in the study.

Although they all have passed adolescence and could be classified as adult speakers altogether, the informants have been divided into several subgroups based on generation. The first generation consists of Hannah and James, a married couple, as well as Annie. All of them were between 77 and 82 years old. The second generation consists of four informants, the married couple George and Susanna, who are children of the three first-generation speakers, as well as Carl and Kathy. The speakers belonging to this generation were between 50 and 56 years old. The third generation includes seven speakers, three males and four females between the ages of 17 and 21. Six of them were either students or former students of the University of

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<sup>10</sup> It has to be mentioned here that this also includes families in which only one parent or grandparent comes from the given locality.



Northampton, while the seventh was a student at a local college. One of the informants, Harry, was the child of second-generation George and Susanna, and the grandchild of all the first-generation speakers. Another third-generation speaker, Jeremy, was the son of Carl. Except for one young informant, Keira, whose parents did not come from Northampton, all the informants have been living in Northampton for at least two generations, often even longer.

Social class was not part of the original selection criteria, but since Estuary English is supposed to be the accent spoken by the middle-class, subjects preferably belonged to the middle ground, viz. at least upper working-class and lower middle-class such as craftsmen or university students. Within the limited time of a master's thesis one has to work with the information and the informants available, and it was not possible for me to find subjects who both had lived in the area under investigation for several generations and belonged to the social middle-class. The first-generation informants, for example, have been classified as working-class, while the second- and third-generation informants are regarded as more socially mobile and their occupations place them in the social middle ground.

As Northampton belongs to a region rarely included in linguistic investigations, an apparent-time study was not only intended to uncover a change in progress, but also to give further information about the traditional Northampton dialect (Northants). In addition to the synchronic approach to linguistic change and variation in this study, the Survey of English Dialects has been consulted in order to allow for a diachronic perspective as well. This is in line with Labov's suggestion to try and find real-time data to contrast one's own recordings with (cf. Milroy & Gordon 2003:36). This study, consequently, covers linguistic data from more than 100 years in Northampton.

Table 3.2 below provides an overview of the speakers of the sample and the generations they belong to. In cases where an informant took part in the pilot study this is indicated in parentheses. Second-generation informant Susanna belongs to the family constituting the pilot study, but she was not interviewed before the second fieldwork period in September 2010. Though social class is not particularly commented on in this investigation, the third column nevertheless provides information about the subjects' occupations.

The geographical background is generally the birthplace and the place of the informant's childhood. Where there is a significant difference between those places, this has been indicated in the table. Since people come from small villages and often are long-term residents of these localities, only the distance from Northampton town centre is given in the table. This decision was made for reasons of privacy.

Table 3.2 List of speakers and their connection to Northampton

<b>Informant</b>	<b>Generation</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Additional information/ geographical background</b>
Annie (pilot)	1 <sup>st</sup>	Shop assistant/ housewife	Village, 5 miles from town centre
Hannah (pilot)	1 <sup>st</sup>	Manual worker/ housewife	Northampton (town), married to James
James (pilot)	1 <sup>st</sup>	Building trade/ teacher	Northampton (town), married to Hannah
Carl	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Self-employed/ former IT-manager	Village, 8 miles from town centre, moved closer to the town at the age of 8, parents came to the village at quite a young age
George (pilot)	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Carpenter (self-employed)	Village, 5 miles from town centre, son of Hannah and James, married to Susanna
Kathy	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Nurse	Village, 12 miles from town centre, parents came from both the town and the same village
Susanna	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Former pharmacy technician/ sewer (self-employed)	Village, 6 miles from town centre, daughter of Annie, married to George
Amy	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Student at the University of Northampton	Northampton (town), third-generation of a Northampton family
Harry (pilot)	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Student at the University of Northampton	Northampton (town), son of George and Susanna, third-generation of a Northampton family
Jeremy	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Student at a local college	Village, 6 miles from town centre, son of Carl, third-generation of a Northamptonshire family
Keira	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Student at the University of Northampton	Northampton (town), first-generation born in Northampton
Max	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Student at the University of Northampton	Wellingborough (town), 12 miles away from Northampton town centre, third-generation of a Northamptonshire family
Nikki	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Graphic designer	Village, 6 miles from town centre, third-generation of a Northamptonshire family
Sara	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Student at the University of Northampton	Northampton (town), second-generation of a Northampton family

### 3.2.3 The interview

The method adopted in this investigation follows the idea of the structured sociolinguistic interview as introduced by Labov, and which he claims to be the only technique of ‘obtaining the volume and quality of recorded speech that is needed for quantitative analysis’ (1984:29). This face-to-face exchange between fieldworker and informant has a more flexible structure than, for example, the *written questionnaire* or the *rapid and anonymous survey*. Questions can be individually adjusted in cases where the interviewee is uncertain or feels uncomfortable. Moreover, informants are likely to give more extensive and detailed answers than in a written questionnaire, and useful phonological data can, according to Milroy and Gordon, be elicited within 20 to 30 minutes (2003:58). It is, however, likely that the interviewee will need some time to accommodate him or herself to this unusual situation and will only change into a more vernacular speech after some time has passed. Labov argues that speakers accommodate their speech styles according to different contexts, but that within the structured interview this style will always show some degree of ‘careful speech’ (1972:79). Schilling-Estes, in contrast, proposes that speakers may vary between different styles throughout the interview (cited in Milroy & Gordon 2003:58).

It is nevertheless possible to achieve different degrees of awareness even in a sociolinguistic interview. When reading a text, the informant may for instance be influenced by the spelling and will presumably pay more attention to his or her speech than in a conversational interview. As with the interviews conducted for the pilot study, the interviews in September consisted of three parts, each supposed to evoke different attention to one’s speech. Another option to ease the tension in an interview situation is to either use two investigators or multiple interviewees. The former technique was adopted during the pilot study in August 2010, but did not always show the desired effect. Consequently, the idea of multiple investigators was abandoned during the main period of the data collection.

Another challenge almost every researcher has to face in such a sociolinguistic interview is to find out how people speak when they are not being observed, to elicit vernacular speech from the informants, and the only way of finding out about this is by observing them. This is also referred to as the *observer’s paradox* (Labov 1972:209). Having in mind the observer’s paradox and the restriction of not being a native speaker of English, the questions in the interview were designed at a rather conversational and simple level. They were mainly concerned with the informants’ lives in Northampton or Northamptonshire. Informants were asked to explain about their work, university life, or their childhood, and how Northampton has

changed since then. The form of the questions was rather open in style and aimed at inviting the interviewee into a conversation. They often started with ‘Can you tell me....?’. Following the conversational part of the interview, the informants were asked to complete a brief set of sentences similar to the method used for the SED. This part of the interview was mainly intended to elicit specific variables which are rather rare in a discourse, for example Yod Coalescence in stressed syllables. In the last part of the interview, the informants were asked to read the short text ‘Comma gets a cure’.<sup>11</sup> This text was especially designed for accent studies and primarily includes the standard lexical sets developed by John C. Wells. For the present study, the consonantal features of the reading passage were of primary interest. Both the elicitation part and the reading part were intended to secure enough tokens of the phonological variables in cases where the interview might turn out to be insufficient.

The interviews lasted from about 20 minutes up to more than one hour, and there was great variation between the generations. They were for the most part conducted at the informants’ houses or in the library of the University of Northampton. In two cases the subjects preferred to come to the researcher’s place of residence. Initial insecurities were occasionally noticed by the investigator, but none of the informants were perceived as feeling extremely uncomfortable. The youngest speakers seemed to be most intimidated by being tape-recorded by a stranger, and it was sometimes demanding to elicit longer stretches of speech from them. In situations like this it is the researcher’s responsibility to make the interviewee feel at ease and to keep the conversation going. Therefore, it has repeatedly been recommended in the literature to prepare a list of topics that help to structure the interview and guide through it. Throughout the interviews I always tried to convey the impression that the informants are the professionals and that I want to learn something from them. In general, the atmosphere during the interviews was perceived as friendly and co-operative.

Finally, it should be pointed out here that the subjects participating in this study did not receive any money for their efforts, but were supplied with homemade Norwegian pastries by the researcher.

### **3.2.4 Auditory analysis**

The following section deals with the process of transcribing, analysing, and quantifying 8.5 hours of recorded speech. All the interviews were recorded on a Panasonic RR-US571 IC

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<sup>11</sup> Copyright 2000 Douglas N. Honorof, Jill McCullough, & Barbara Somerville. All rights reserved.  
<http://web.ku.edu/~idea/readings/comma.pdf> accessed 30 July 2010.

Recorder. This dictaphone comes with a built-in zoom microphone that focuses on the voice of a single speaker who is placed some distance from the microphone. Consequently, the recordings were generally of a good quality.

In order to start analysing the data, the recordings were transferred to a computer as MP3 files, and, for reasons of anonymity, all the informants were given a pseudonym. In a next step each interview was transcribed orthographically as precisely as possible. Orthographic transcriptions have the advantage that a lot of tokens can be identified prior to the auditory analysis. In other cases the recordings had to be listened to simultaneously. This was specifically necessary with pre-pausal L Vocalisation and intervocalic T Glottalling across word-boundaries, where a pause between the words is not visible in the orthographic transcription.

The transcriptions consisted of about 45,000 words in total. Before they were scanned for possible tokens, the variables and their realisations had to be defined. This study deals with consonants only. In contrast to vowels, which are more continuous in nature, consonants are rather discrete. This means that they can have a binary realisation: either one variant, or another one. In this investigation each variable was assigned two variants. In cases where an apparently binary variable had an intermediate realisation it was nevertheless assigned to one of the two defined variants. An example can be given with T Glottalling, where the variable /t/, when realised as a tap [ɾ], was counted as [t]. Since this study is concerned with the question of whether or not features of Estuary English have penetrated into Northampton speech, variables and their variants were chosen on the basis of previous descriptions of EE. In addition, personal observations that were made during the conduction of the pilot study in August 2010 were also taken into consideration. The latter circumstance led to the elimination of originally intended variables and to the incorporation of others. Thus, TH Fronting, H Dropping and word-internal T Glottalling between vowels were included after the pilot study.

Moreover, phonetic contexts and conditioning factors had to be determined. Descriptions for each variable can be found in section 3.1. Another important aspect to be considered for a reliable analysis in any sociolinguistic investigation is the amount of tokens analysed. According to Labov's *principle of accountability* every token that occurs in the defined phonetic context, whether it supports a hypothesis or not, has to be taken into account (1972:72). Milroy and Gordon, moreover, refer to G. R. Guy, who deems a number of 30 tokens per variable sufficient in order to make reliable inferences on a speaker's usage. He points out that fewer than 10 tokens may be a sign of random fluctuation, whereas a number

higher than 10 indicates up to 90% conformity with the predicted norm (2003:164). With reference to Guy, I analysed the first 30 tokens of every variable in its defined context. For some variables the whole interview was needed, while for others the first part of an interview was sufficient. In some cases the amount of 30 tokens per variable could not be achieved. After having identified the tokens to be analysed, in total about 2250 tokens, the variants were then coded auditorily by repeatedly listening to the interviews. The phonetic documentations of the interviews were based on the International Phonetic Alphabet (revised to 2005).

One of the drawbacks of an auditory analysis is that it lacks the objectivity of an instrumental analysis. A researcher might, for example, believe to hear a variant that cannot be heard by someone else. Hudson refers to Knowles and Le Page et al., who indicate that different researchers can come to different conclusions when analysing the same text, although they may all be professional phoneticians (Hudson 1980:145). In order to ensure the reliability of an analysis, it has been proposed to either analyse a large number of tokens, so that a misinterpretation of a token is of less consequence, or to have a second coder analyse excerpts of the sample (Milroy & Gordon 2003:151). The latter suggestion was followed here, and parts of the corpus have been listened to by the researcher's supervisor, a trained phonetician herself. In cases where the perceptions of a variant differed, a second evaluation was carried out. Where a different perception persisted it could be assigned to the legitimate subjectivity of an auditory analysis. In general, both listeners agreed in the great majority of cases, and the analysis can, thus, be regarded as stable.

### **3.2.5 Quantification**

Differences in the speech of a community under investigation can be *absolute* and *relative*. The former indicates that one accent or dialect has qualitatively different phonemes than another accent or dialect. Relative differences, in contrast, give information about how often a variant is used within a speech community. Therefore, methods of quantification are of major importance for linguistic research that studies variability (Chambers & Trudgill 1998:135-136). Milroy states that variants of binary variables, such as the ones investigated here, are best dealt with as percentages (1995:113). Consequently, the first step in the quantification of the linguistic data collected in the interviews included counting the identified variants of each variable and calculating the percentage scores for the individual speakers (for the raw data see Appendix A). In a next step, group scores for each variant were calculated. They can either be

computed by adding the individuals' percentage scores and dividing them through the number of speakers in each group, or by treating the group as if it were a single speaker. In the quantification of the linguistic data, I used the second variant for calculating the group scores. Group scores enable the researcher to make generalisations about the language use in a community under study.

With Yod Coalescence, two group scores had to be calculated for the first-generation informants. This was done because one speaker only produced two tokens for that variable, which indicated 100% usage of one variant. However, two tokens are not sufficient in order to distinguish between real usage patterns or merely random fluctuation in the informant's speech.

## 4. RESULTS

This chapter presents and describes the findings of the data collected from three generations of Northampton-born speakers. This research project is an apparent-time study and age as well as place of origin were of main interest for the selection of the informants. With the quantified data at hand, other aspects might, additionally, turn out to be worth commenting on. Are there, for example, remarkable differences in the speech of the males and the females? Are there any similarities in the speech of informants belonging to the same family? Social class will not be commented on in particular, but is included insofar as that the research subjects, with the exception of the oldest generation, all have occupations that place them in the social middle ground, viz. upper working-class or lower middle-class. As mentioned earlier, Wells characterises EE speakers as belonging to the lower middle-class and having access to higher education (1998-2000). For more information on the informants see Table 3.2.

The research question underlying the investigation is whether or not features associated with Estuary English have spread geographically as far as Northamptonshire. Since EE has only recently started spreading across south-eastern England and it is supposed to be spoken by the middle-class, I expect to find evidence for at least some of the consonantal features outlined in sections 2.2.1 and 3.1, and I expect to find them primarily among the socially mobile third-generation speakers. The second hypothesis, namely that the features have spread as a result of accent levelling, is not relevant for this chapter and will be discussed in chapter 5.

For the purpose of presenting and describing the results, the variables are dealt with individually and follow the same order as in section 3.1. The tables give the total number of tokens (*N*) for each variant as used by the individual generations, along with the respective percentage scores for each group. A graph illustrates the numbers given in the tables. Group scores, on the one hand, can increase the statistical significance of linguistic data. On the other hand, they conceal variation within the group. Thus, graphs with the individual percentage scores are included as well.

It should further be noted that all the quantified results in this chapter are given as whole numbers, without decimals. This is done in order to make it easier for the reader to follow the descriptions. For all the variables it should also be remembered that the sociolinguistic interview is rather formal in style and that speakers may tend to use a more standard pronunciation in cases where they would use the vernacular in more informal situations.



## 4.1 Results for L Vocalisation

L Vocalisation refers to the realisation of pre-consonantal and pre-pausal /l/ as [ʊ], where RP has a dark [ɫ]. L Vocalisation is one of the variables that is commonly agreed upon to be associated with Estuary English, and one that has in fact also entered RP (see also 3.1.1). In Northampton speech, the traditional realisation of /l/ in the above-described environment is [ɫ].

In the analysis 30 tokens were elicited per speaker so that the data set for L Vocalisation contains 420 tokens altogether. Table 4.2 below gives the total number of tokens for each variant and the percentage scores of vocalised and lateral realisations of pre-consonantal and pre-pausal /l/ per group.

Table 4.1 L Vocalisation: Numbers and group scores

Generation	[ʊ]		[ɫ]	
	N	%	N	%
1 <sup>st</sup>	57	63	33	37
2 <sup>nd</sup>	83	69	37	31
3 <sup>rd</sup>	174	83	36	17

From the table above we learn that 57 instances out of 90 in the first-generation sample are realised as [ʊ], while the traditional Northampton variant [ɫ] is used in 33 cases. In percent this makes 63% use of the vocalised variant and 37% use of dark [ɫ].

Among the second-generation informants, 83 instances out of together 120 are realised as a vocalised [ʊ]. The traditional variant [ɫ] occurs in 37 instances. Hence, the vocalised realisation of pre-consonantal and pre-pausal /l/ occurs in 69% and the traditional variant in 31% of the cases. Compared to the first-generation speakers of the sample, there is a slight increase in the use of the vocalised variant.

The third generation provides the largest group in the sample and, in total, 210 tokens were elicited for the variable (l). As illustrated in Table 4.1 above, 174 tokens are realised as [ʊ], while in 36 of the cases the speakers use the traditional dark [ɫ]. The quantified data show that the use of the vocalised variant has increased to 83% with the third generation, while the use of dark [ɫ] has decreased to only 17%.

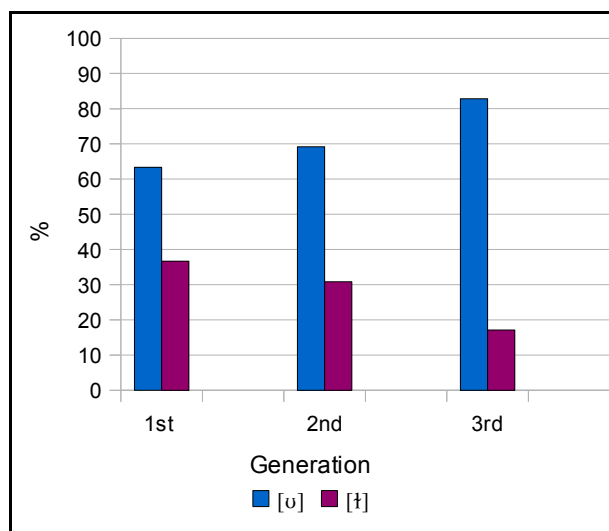


Figure 4.1.1 L Vocalisation: Percentage use of [ʊ] and [ɪ] per group.

The figure above shows the general increase of L Vocalisation among the three groups of Northampton speakers. It illustrates that the oldest generation has already crossed the 50% mark in their use of the vocalised variant, while the youngest generation in the sample uses [ʊ] in more than 80% of the occurrences. The latter observation is in line with the research project's hypothesis that features associated with Estuary English will be most present in the speech of the youngest speakers. However, the fact that the oldest speakers already show such a high frequency of L Vocalisation indicates that this is a feature that is already firmly established in Northampton speech and, thus, must have been present for quite some time. This is a rather unexpected finding, given that L Vocalisation in Northampton was not reported in the SED material. Figure 4.1.2 below gives more detailed information about the use of [ʊ] by each individual speaker.

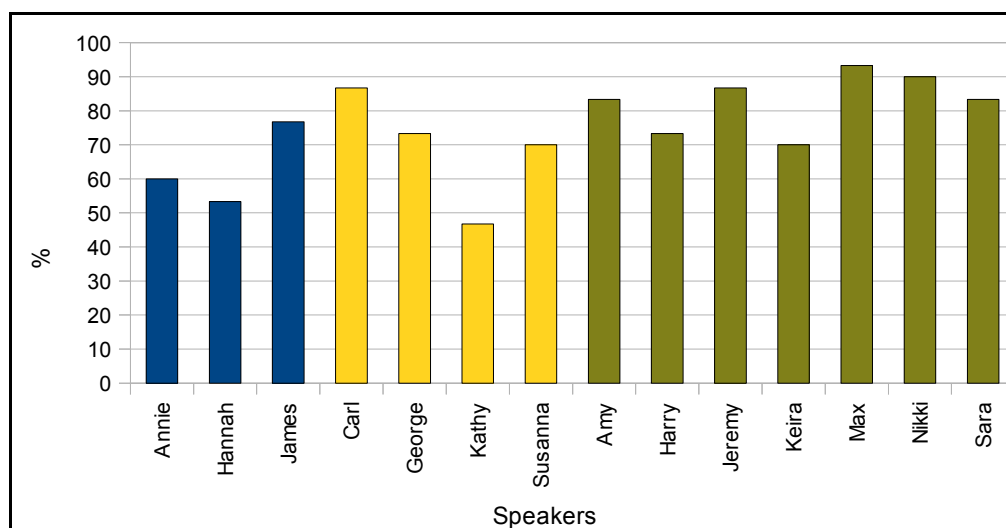


Figure 4.1.2 L Vocalisation: Percentage use of [ʊ] for each individual speaker. (First generation = blue, second generation = yellow, third generation = green)

Figure 4.1.2 illustrates the percentage use of [ʊ] as realised by each individual in the sample. It should be pointed out here that the use of the vocalised variant is not only present in the speech of all the speakers, but that, with the exception of second-generation informant Kathy, each speaker also shows greater use of the ‘new’ variant than of the traditional variant [ɪ]. There seems to be a systematic distinction between men and women in the two oldest generations, but not with the youngest speakers. In the first generation, James is leading in the use of L Vocalisation, while his wife Hannah uses the fewest realisations of the vocalised variant. The individual scores for the second generation show a continuation of this trend, where the men contribute most of the vocalised variant. Among the third-generation informants, the use of [ʊ] is more evenly distributed between the male and the female speakers. Moreover, all of the latter informants show L Vocalisation in more than 70% of the tokens. Max even realises more than 90% of the tokens as [ʊ] and is thus leading in his group.

Although the overall use of L Vocalisation is increasing in the speech of the informants, the results show a relatively stable use of [ʊ] for the grandfather (James), the father (George), and the son (Harry). All three of them have between 73% and 77% usage of the vocalised variant. This characteristic is also repeated by second-generation Carl and his son Jeremy, who both demonstrate identical percentage scores (87%) for the vocalisation of pre-pausal and pre-consonantal /l/. First-generation speaker Annie and her daughter Susanna differ in their use of [ʊ] by exhibiting 60% and 70% respectively.

## 4.2 Results for Yod Coalescence

Yod Coalescence refers to the coalescence of the alveolar plosives /t/ and /d/ plus a palatal approximant /j/ to the palato-alveolar affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/. This investigation has included syllables that carry both primary and secondary stress, as in *tune* and *attitude*, as a token of potential Yod Coalescence. The word *during*, which even in RP is regularly pronounced with the coalesced variant, was not included in the analysis. It appears quite frequently in everyday speech and including it in the analysis might therefore run the risk of skewing the data for Yod Coalescence (cf. also Hannisdal 2007:223).

Words with Yod Coalescence in stressed syllables do not occur as often in everyday colloquial speech as, for example, words containing pre-consonantal and pre-pausal /l/ or intervocalic /t/. Consequently, the data of this investigation contain rather few relevant tokens for the variable (tj,dj), which makes it difficult to state generalisations about a possible change in progress. Nevertheless, there can be observed general tendencies in the traditional Yod Dropping Northampton accent. The complete data set from all three generations contains 133 tokens. The variable (tj,dj) was divided into two variants, namely [tʃ,dʒ] and ‘others’. A more detailed description of the variants can be found in 3.1.2.

Table 4.2 Yod Coalescence: Numbers and group scores

Generation	[tʃ,dʒ]		Others	
	N	%	N	%
1 <sup>st</sup>	7	32	15	68
2 <sup>nd</sup>	30	79	8	21
3 <sup>rd</sup>	65	89	8	11

Of the 133 tokens collected for Yod Coalescence, 22 tokens were elicited from the first generation. While seven of these tokens are realised as [tʃ,dʒ], 15 tokens have a traditional Northampton pronunciation [t,d] or a standard pronunciation [tj,dj]. Hence, the uncoalesced variants are used in 68% of the cases, and the coalesced variant is used in 32%.

Hannah, unfortunately, produced only two tokens of (tj,dj), which in the analysis for the individual speakers leads to 100% usage of the traditional Northampton variant. Two tokens are, however, not considered sufficient in order to distinguish between real usage patterns or

merely random fluctuation in the informant's speech. For this reason, the group score for the oldest generation was computed anew, this time without Hannah's data. The results show a slight increase in the percentage score of Yod Coalescence. The use of the coalesced variant increases from 32% to 35%, while the use of the uncoalesced variant declines from 68% to 65%. We can conclude that the comparison between the two data sets illustrates a slight difference in the group scores, but it does not disprove the beginning tendency towards Yod Coalescence in stressed syllables in Northampton.

Thirty-eight tokens were collected from the second-generation informants, of which 30 are realised as the coalesced variant [tʃ,dʒ]. The remaining eight tokens are realised as the traditional or standard variants [t,d] and [tj,dj] respectively. The use of the coalesced variant has increased to 79% among the second-generation speakers. 'Other' variants are used in 21% of the instances.

The third generation provides 73 tokens for the variable Yod Coalescence, of which 65 are realised as [tʃ,dʒ], while the residual eight tokens are realised as one of the 'other' variants. The resulting percentage score for the coalesced forms has risen to 89%. In 11% of the occurrences the speakers choose an uncoalesced variant.

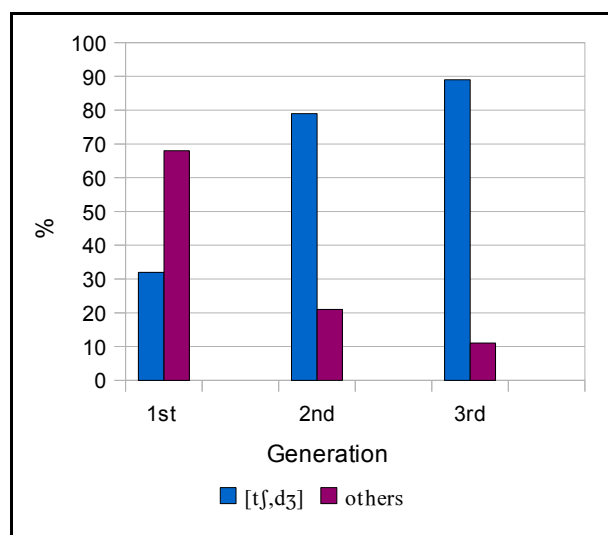


Figure 4.2.1 Yod Coalescence: Percentage use of [tʃ,dʒ] and 'other' variants per group.

The figure above illustrates the development of Yod Coalescence in Northampton during the last decades as exemplified by the speaker sample. Despite the fact that there are relatively few

tokens to work with, it is still possible to observe some tendencies in the speech of the three generations.

Although Yod Coalescence is, to a minor degree, already present with the older speakers, the use of [tʃ] and [dʒ] increased dramatically with the second generation, who use 47% more of the coalesced variants than their ‘parents’. The use has further increased to almost 90% among the youngest speakers, and it seems that the traditional variant [t,d] has almost completely given way to [tʃ,dʒ] over three generations. Figure 4.2.2 below gives more detailed information about the distribution of the variants among the individual speakers.

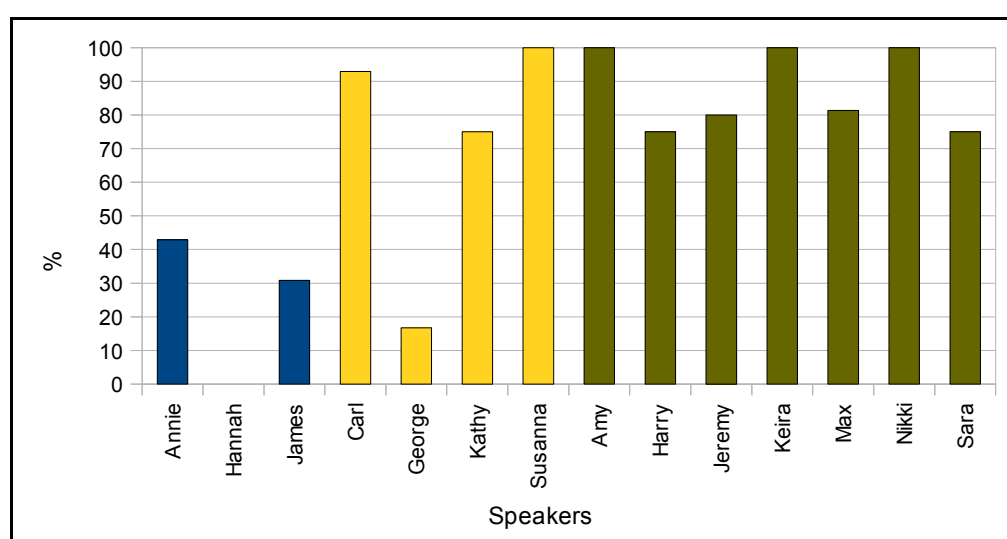


Figure 4.2.2 Yod Coalescence: Percentage use of [tʃ,dʒ] for each individual speaker.

(First generation = blue, second generation = yellow, third generation = green)

The figure above illustrates that, although almost all informants show use of the coalesced variant, there is a clear difference between the generations. While the first generation still has relatively low scores, with Hannah showing no coalescence at all, the third-generation speakers all use Yod Coalescence in more than 70% of instances. Three of the seven youngest informants realise all tokens of (tj,dj) as the coalesced variant. Figure 4.2.2 furthermore clarifies that Yod Coalescence has already increased rapidly among the second-generation sample, where three out of four informants show Yod Coalescence in more than 70% of all occurrences. Susanna even realises 100% of the tokens as [tʃ,dʒ]. In general, all the highest scores for Yod Coalescence are produced by the women.

Third-generation informant Harry realises the fewest of the coalesced variant in his age

group. The same applies for his father, George, who uses less than 20% of the coalesced variant and thus lowers the overall percentage score for the second-generation group. The grandfather, James, shows slightly more use of [tʃ,dʒ] than George. Here, it has to be noted that this solely applies for syllables in which (tj,dj) has secondary stress as in *attitude*. Otherwise, he uses straightforward Yod Dropping. Second-generation speaker Carl realises more than 90% of the tokens as [tʃ,dʒ], while his son Jeremy uses 80%. Annie, who shows the coalesced variants in both the interview style and the reading style but not in the elicitation task, is leading the use of Yod Coalescence in the oldest group of speakers. The same applies for her daughter Susanna, who shows the coalesced variant in all of the tokens.

Among the third-generation speakers, three out of four female speakers use 100% of the coalesced variant. The fourth informant, Sara, realises 75% as [tʃ,dʒ], while the remaining 25% have the standard variant [tj,dj]. None of her tokens have Yod Dropping.

Another observation that deserves attention here is Max's use of Yod words. As will become obvious in the course of this chapter, Max is often leading the change of the variables investigated. With (tj,dj), however, he realises 'only' 81% of the tokens as [tʃ,dʒ] and 19% as 'other' variants. What should be noted is that he neither used straightforward Yod Dropping nor the standard variant [tj,dj] instead, but rather another new variant, namely ST Palatalisation.<sup>12</sup> ST Palatalisation refers to the replacement of the RP variant [st] by [ʃt] in words such as *student* and *strict*, and Altendorf characterises this variable as a feature of Estuary English (2003). In this study, ST Palatalisation has been confined to *stu*-clusters as in *studio*, which is the only phonetic environment relevant for Yod Coalescence. Max varies between [ʃtj] or [ʃtu] in these situations.

### 4.3 Results for T Glottalling in word-final position

T Glottalling refers to the realisation of the alveolar plosive /t/ as a glottal stop [ʔ]. Despite its traditional stigmatisation, it is one of the features that are currently spreading both socially and geographically across the whole of England. As mentioned earlier, T Glottalling in word-final intervocalic position is widely considered to be a typical feature of Estuary English and can even be found with younger RP speakers. This research project investigates both intervocalic T Glottalling in word-final position, viz. across word-boundaries as in *eat it*, and in word-

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<sup>12</sup> This term was introduced by Altendorf (2003:XIII).

medial position as in *water*. Section 4.3 is concerned with the former environment, while intervocalic T Glottalling in word-medial position will be presented below. I did not especially look for instances of intervocalic T Glottalling across word-boundaries in the SED material, but I could not find any instances of glottal stops in word-final position in general.

Where possible, 30 tokens were elicited from each speaker for the variable (t) in word-final position. For one speaker, only 24 tokens could be gathered. The data set for T Glottalling thus contains 414 tokens altogether. The total number of tokens and the percentage use for intervocalic T Glottalling word-finally are given in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 T Glottalling in word-final intervocalic position:  
Numbers and group scores

Generation	[ʔ]		[t]	
	N	%	N	%
1 <sup>st</sup>	8	9	82	91
2 <sup>nd</sup>	49	41	71	59
3 <sup>rd</sup>	179	88	25	12

From a total of 90 tokens collected from the first-generation informants, a glottal stop is used in only eight instances, while [t] occurs in 82 instances. With 9% use of [ʔ] and 91% use of [t], the latter variant is the common pronunciation among the eldest informants in the sample.

The data set of the second generation consists of 120 tokens for word-final intervocalic /t/. In 49 cases, /t/ is replaced by a glottal stop [ʔ] and 71 tokens are realised as a fortis alveolar plosive [t]. Consequently, the second-generation informants use 41% T Glottalling and 59% of the traditional variant and/or standard variant. Compared to the 9% usage of glottal stops in the first-generation sample, this is an increase of 32% when it comes to intervocalic T Glottalling in word-final position .

The data collection for the youngest generation consists of 204 tokens. In 179 of these tokens /t/ is replaced by a glottal stop, while 25 tokens contain [t]. Thus, the third generation of the sample uses a glottal stop [ʔ] in 88% of all instances and [t] in 12%. Compared to the second generation this is an increase of 47% in the use of the glottallised variant. The difference between the third and the first generation is a 79% increase in the use of a glottal stop for (t) in intervocalic word-final position.



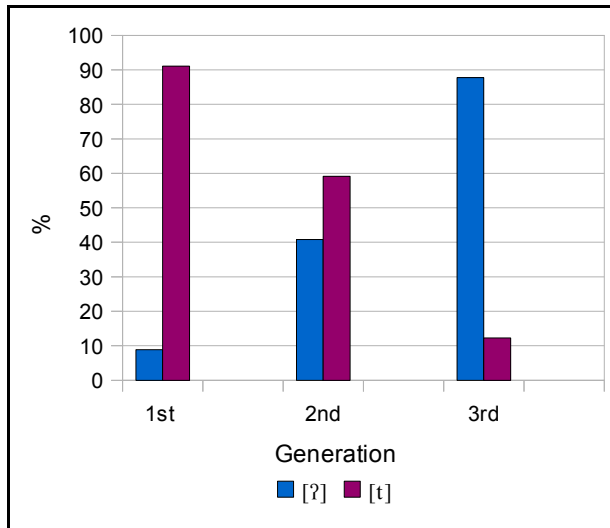


Figure 4.3.1 Intervocalic T Glottalling word-finally: Percentage use of [ʔ] and [t] per group.

The figure above illustrates that the use of the glottal variant and fortis alveolar plosive has reversed over two generations. While the first generation uses 91% [t] and 9% [ʔ], the third generation uses 88% [ʔ] and 12% [t] respectively. With 41% use of a glottal stop, the second generation lies directly between the first and the third generation. Figure 4.3.2 gives more detailed information about the distribution of the variants among the individual speakers.

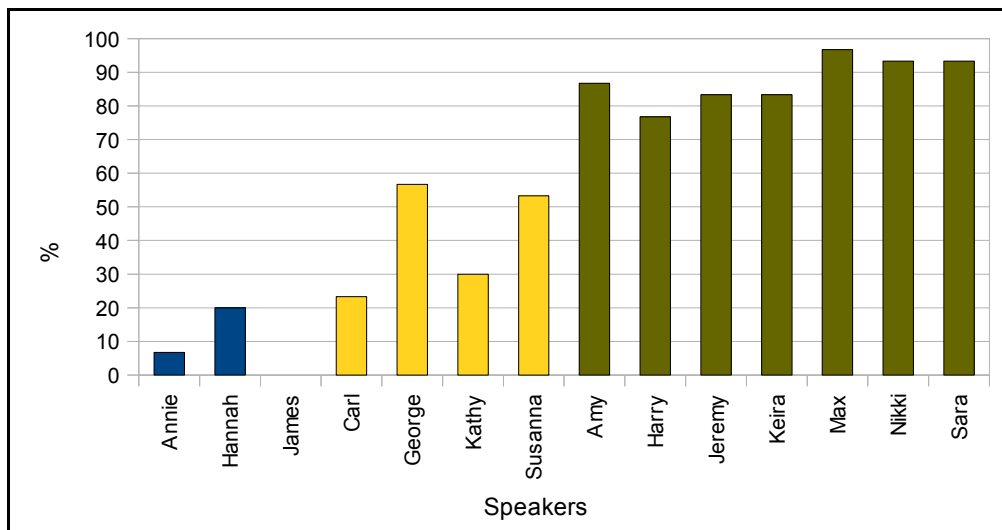


Figure 4.3.2 Intervocalic T Glottalling word-finally: Percentage use of [ʔ] for each individual speaker.  
(First generation = blue, second generation = yellow, third generation = green)

Figure 4.3.2 illustrates that, among the first-generation speakers, James shows no glottal replacement for word-final intervocalic /t/ at all. However, he is the only male informant in this group and it is difficult to make generalisations about men's speech in general based on one single person. What can be noted is that the women of the oldest generation are leading the use of [ʔ] in this phonetic environment. Hannah realises 20% of the variable (t) as [ʔ], and Annie uses it in 7% of the instances. This is repeated in both the second and the third generation, where the females on average use more glottal stops than the males. The difference is however too slight to be regarded as significant here.

A look at the individual scores makes it possible to calculate the average use of [ʔ] among the males and the females, namely 40% for the males versus 42% for the females in the second generation and 86% versus 89% in the third generation. The percentage scores show that there is no notable difference between men and women. Since T Glottalling appears to have lost its stigma in word-final intervocalic position and is even found among younger RP-speakers, it does not seem surprising that this former male, working-class feature is also frequently used by women.

The third-generation sample further shows that, except Harry, all of the younger speakers even use glottal replacement in more than 80% of the instances. Max is even approaching 100% frequency. It should also be mentioned here that Jeremy, in contrast to his father Carl, almost quadrupled the use of [ʔ] in word-final intervocalic position. In general, T Glottalling in this environment is relatively homogeneously distributed among the youngest generation and there is a clear pattern observable in Figure 4.3.2. All the informants of the first generation show either low frequency or no glottal stop at all for (t) word-finally. Among the second generation, all informants lie in the medium range, while the speakers of the youngest generation all show a high frequency of glottal stops in the described environment. Each speaker of the second generation shows a higher score in their use of [ʔ] than the speakers of the first generation, and each third-generation informant scores higher than every individual from the second generation.

Concluding, it can be noted that the use of T Glottalling in intervocalic word-final position among the youngest generation is in line with the investigation's hypothesis that features associated with EE will be most present with the youngest age group. Since Hannah and Annie already used glottal stops it is, however, not certain whether this is a feature introduced by Londoners or whether it is the continuation of an already existing trend.

#### 4.4 T Glottalling in intervocalic word-medial position

In contrast to the glottalisation of (t) in word-final position discussed above, T Glottalling in intervocalic word-medial position is still stigmatised. It is commonly regarded as a Cockney feature and has not yet been included in the description of Estuary English. It appears, however, that also this type of T Glottalling is spreading out of London and into a wider geographical area (cf. 2.1.4). In the traditional Northampton accent, intervocalic /t/ word-medially does not have a glottal realisation.

For the variable under investigation it was not possible to collect 30 tokens per speaker. Hence, the data set for T Glottalling in intervocalic word-medial position consisted of 379 tokens. Table 4.4 gives the total number of tokens and the percentage use for the variants [ʔ] and [t] per group.

Table 4.4 T Glottalling in word-medial intervocalic position: Numbers and group scores

Generation	[ʔ]		[t]	
	N	%	N	%
1 <sup>st</sup>	0	0	80	100
2 <sup>nd</sup>	7	6	113	94
3 <sup>rd</sup>	106	59	73	41

The first-generation informants always use [t] for /t/ in intervocalic word-medial position and, thus, show 100% standard pronunciation for that variable.

Within the second-generation sample a slight change towards intervocalic T Glottalling is noticeable. Of the 120 tokens gathered in the interviews, seven tokens show a glottal stop [ʔ]. The remaining 113 tokens still contain a fortis alveolar plosive [t] in word-medial intervocalic position. Consequently, the second-generation informants use 6% T Glottalling as opposed to 94% usage of the traditional variant. Although the difference between the first and the second generation's use of [t] in intervocalic word-medial position is still very subtle, it may already be an indicator for a possible change in progress.

This assumption is strengthened when we look at the data for the third-generation

informants. Of the 179 tokens elicited, 106 tokens have a glottal stop and only 73 tokens contain the fortis alveolar plosives [t]. This leads to an increase in the frequency of glottal stops in 59% of all the cases. With a use of 41%, the traditional variant [t] for /t/ in intervocalic word-medial position is dramatically decreasing. Figure 4.4.1 below illustrates the increase of the glottal stop among the three generations.

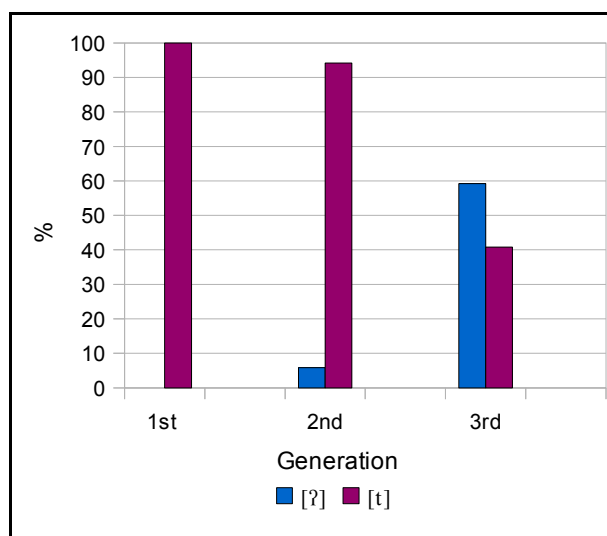


Figure 4.4.1 Intervocalic T Glottalling word-medially: Percentage use of [ʔ] and [t] per group.

As can be seen from the figure above, the use of glottal stops among the youngest generation has outrun the traditional use of [t] in intervocalic word-medial position. With regard to the project's hypothesis, this is an interesting finding. Although T Glottalling in this environment is not considered an EE feature, but rather a broad London feature that has traditionally been stigmatised, the results of this investigation seem to follow the above-mentioned trend that T Glottalling is spreading across a wider geographical area. From Figure 4.4.1 we can assume that [ʔ] in intervocalic word-medial position was introduced into Northampton speech in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A look at the figure below can help to explain whether this feature is evenly distributed among the youngest speakers, or whether one or two speakers are responsible for this high percentage score.

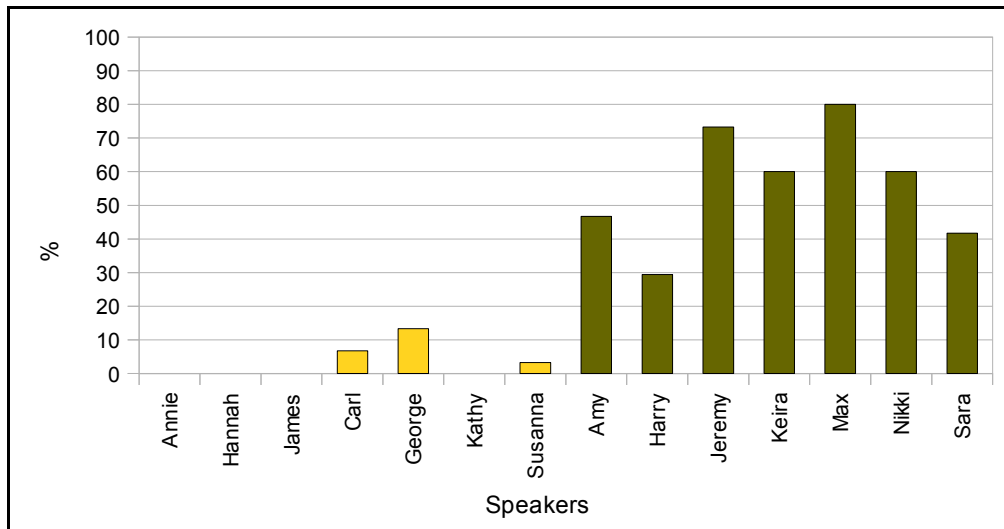


Figure 4.4.2 Intervocalic T Glottalling word-medially: Percentage use of [ʔ] for each individual speaker.  
(First generation = blue, second generation = yellow, third generation = green)

As already indicated in the group scores, Figure 4.4.2 shows that a glottal stop for intervocalic /t/ in word-medial position is non-existent in the speech of the oldest informants. The use of [ʔ] in this environment starts with the second-generation informants, where three out of four speakers use a glottal stop, though the use is still very rare. As with intervocalic T Glottalling in word-final position, George realises most tokens with a glottal stop, followed by Carl and then Susanna. Together, the males produce 10% glottalised variants of (t) and Susanna produces 2% – which equals only one single token. The use of the glottal variant has since then increased drastically from the second to the third generation.

Among the third-generation sample, not only does every informant use glottal replacement for /t/ in intervocalic word-medial position, but the use is also relatively frequent. As with L Vocalisation and T Glottalling in word-final intervocalic position, Max is leading the use of a glottal stop in this environment with 80%. Similar to intervocalic T Glottalling word-finally, Harry also shows the fewest realisations of [ʔ] in word-medial position. A dramatic difference can again be recognised in the speech of Jeremy and his father. While Carl only realises 7% of (t) as [ʔ], Jeremy shows 73% frequency of this variant. The males of the third generation are clearly leading the change of (t) in word-medial position with an average use of a glottal stop in 66% of the instances as opposed to 54% among the female informants. Although the use of [ʔ] in this environment has traditionally been associated with male, working-class speakers, it seems to be more and more accepted among all the young speakers.

## 4.5 Results for TH Fronting

TH Fronting refers to the realisation of the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ as labiodental fricatives [f] and [v]. TH Fronting is commonly regarded as a boundary marker between the Cockney accent and Estuary English. It has, however, been mentioned earlier that the fronting of the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ has recently been spreading both socially and geographically. TH Fronting has not been a feature of the traditional Northampton accent as outlined earlier, where the dental fricatives were the usual choice of pronunciation.

There were no difficulties in collecting enough spoken data for the variable (th, dh), so that 30 tokens per speaker could be elicited. The data set for TH Fronting thus contains 420 tokens altogether. Table 4.5 shows the total number of tokens per variant as well as the percentage scores for (th,dh) as pronounced by the informants.

Table 4.5 TH Fronting: Numbers and group scores

Generation	[f,v]		[θ,ð]	
	N	%	N	%
1 <sup>st</sup>	0	0	90	100
2 <sup>nd</sup>	0	0	120	100
3 <sup>rd</sup>	55	26	155	74

The table indicates that the variable (th,dh) has undergone a great change in Northampton during the last decades. Among the first- and the second-generation informants no instance of the altogether 210 tokens is realised as a labiodental fricative. Both groups show 100% use of the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ in words such as *brother* and *think*. These findings also correspond with the results from the SED described in section 2.3.2.

The data for the youngest generation consist of 210 tokens. Fifty-five of these are realised as either a voiceless labiodental fricative [f] or a voiced labiodental fricative [v]. Some 155 tokens have a traditional realisation with the dental fricatives [θ] and [ð] respectively. In percent, the third-generation informants pronounce 26% of the tokens with a labiodental fricative and 74% with a dental fricative. The change towards TH Fronting becomes especially obvious in Figure 4.5.1 below.

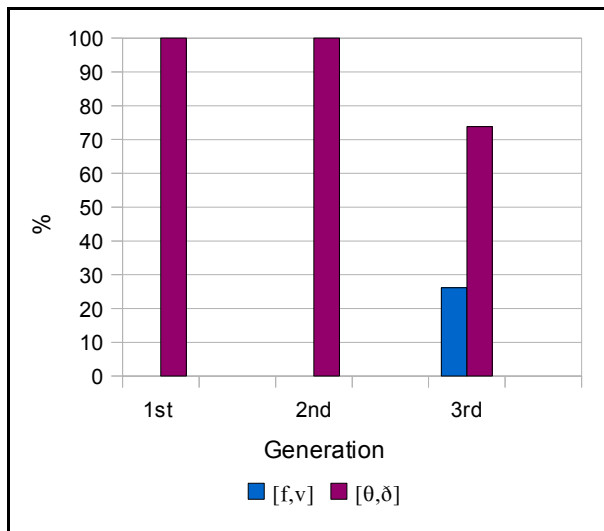


Figure 4.5.1 TH Fronting: Percentage use of [f,v] and [θ,ð] per group.

As can be seen in the figure above, TH Fronting is a newly introduced feature in Northampton speech that has increased quite rapidly in recent years. Both the first generation and the second generation show 100% use of the traditional dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, while the third-generation informants already use TH Fronting in more than 25% of all the instances. The results for TH Fronting are the most surprising ones since it was not expected to be found in the speech of socially mobile university students. A look at the figure below provides an insight into variation within the youngest group of speakers.

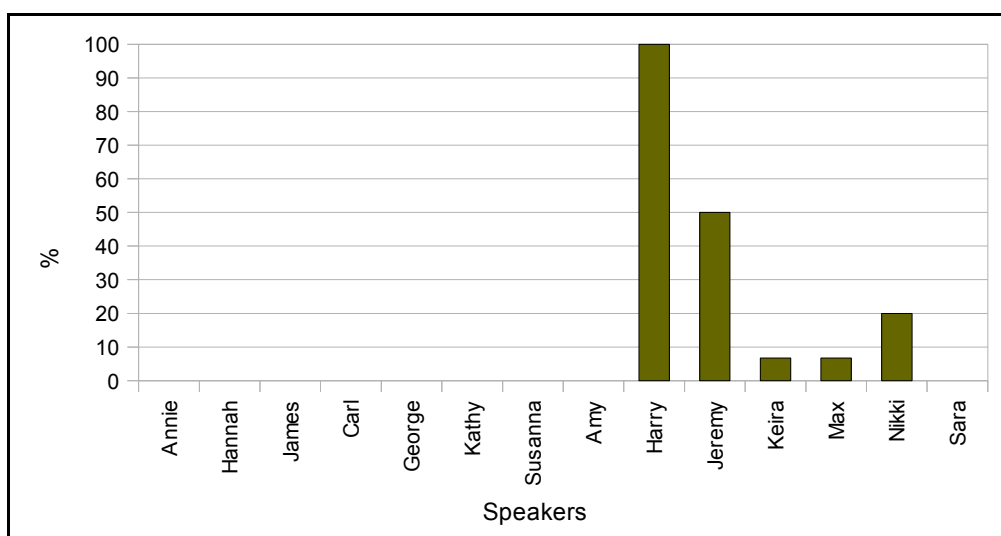


Figure 4.5.2 TH Fronting: Percentage use of [f,v] for each individual speaker. (First generation = blue, second generation = yellow, third generation = green)

Figure 4.5.2 illustrates that there is great individual variation in the use of the labiodental fricatives [f] and [v] within the youngest generation. As can be seen in the figure, two of the informants, namely Amy and Sara, do not use any labiodental fricatives at all. Harry, in contrast, shows 100% use of the labiodental variant. He is followed by Jeremy, who uses [f] and [v] in 50% of the instances. Nikki realises 20% of the tokens as a labiodental fricative. It should be mentioned here, that her use of TH Fronting is much more frequent with words containing the voiced dental fricative /ð/ such as *bother*, *rather*, and *with*. However, many of these tokens were not included within the first 30 tokens analysed, and her use of the labiodental fricatives might have been higher in another part of the interview.

Keira and Max both use less than 10% of the labiodental variants. TH Fronting, together with intervocalic T Glottalling word-medially, is the most stigmatised feature investigated here, and it is rather surprising that Max shows such low frequency of the labiodental fricatives but is simultaneously leading the change with intervocalic T Glottalling.

We can conclude that five of the seven informants in the third-generation sample show signs of TH Fronting and that the change is definitely led by the male informants. It has, however, to be mentioned that the high percentage score for this group partially has to be accorded to Harry, who uses 100% TH Fronting throughout the interview. The sample shows everything from zero realisation of [f,v] to 100% fronting of /θ/ and /ð/ among the youngest age group, and it is obvious that there is a change going on with this variable in the speech of Northampton.

#### 4.6 Results for H Dropping

H Dropping refers to the replacement of the glottal fricative /h/ by zero in stressed syllables word-initially in words such as *home*, *hit*, or *housework*, or word-medially as in *inherently*. It is a typical feature of working-class accents across the whole of England. It is also characteristic for traditional Northampton speech and has therefore been included in the investigation. EE speakers, in contrast, characteristically do not use H Dropping. Consequently, the youngest generation is expected to pronounce initial /h/ in stressed syllables. (h) tokens were frequently produced by all the informants, and there were no difficulties getting hold of 30 tokens per speaker. The data set for H Dropping thus consists of 420 tokens altogether. Table 4.6 gives the numbers and the percentage scores of [h] and Ø per group.



Table 4.6 H Dropping: Numbers and group scores

Generation	[h]		Ø	
	N	%	N	%
1 <sup>st</sup>	58	64	32	36
2 <sup>nd</sup>	106	88	14	12
3 <sup>rd</sup>	196	93	14	7

The analysis of the 90 tokens collected from the oldest speakers shows that 58 tokens contain [h], while 32 instances reveal a lack of [h]. That means that H Dropping among the first-generation speakers of this sample occurs in 36% of the tokens, while 64% contain [h].

In total, 120 tokens were analysed for the second-generation informants. The results reveal that the majority of instances (106 tokens) are recognised as [h], while the remaining 14 tokens are recognised as Ø. The percentage scores show that the standard variant is used in 88% of the instances, and the non-standard variant is used in 12%. Compared to the first-generation informants, H Dropping has decreased by 24%.

The third-generation informants realise 196 tokens of the altogether 210 tokens as the standard variant, and only 14 tokens contain the loss of /h/. This leads to 93% use of [h] as opposed to 7% use of the traditional Northampton variant. To sum up, it can be stated that [h] has almost completely replaced the traditional /h/-loss among the socially mobile informants.

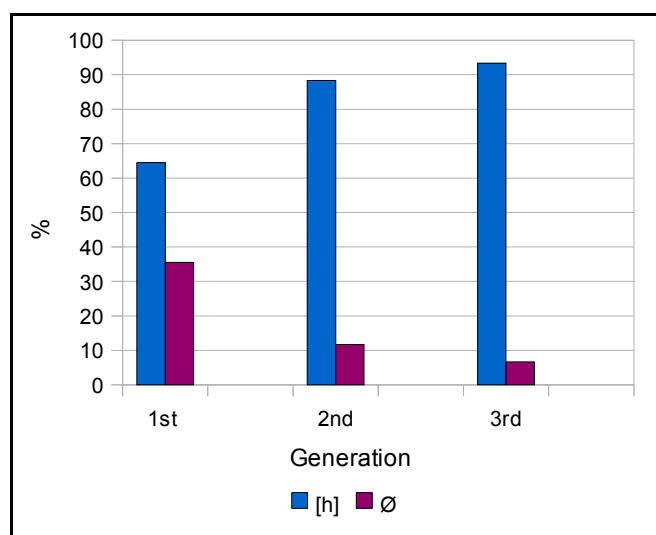


Figure 4.6.1 H Dropping: Percentage use of [h] and Ø per group.

The figure above demonstrates that the loss of /h/ in stressed syllables is decreasing constantly among all the speakers of the sample. While the use of H Dropping among the first-generation informants still lies in the medium range, both the second generation and the third generation show a relatively low frequency of Ø. The findings from Figure 4.6.1 are in line with the expectation that there will be a counter-movement in the pronunciation of (h) words, and that the youngest informants will have significantly increased their use of /h/ in stressed syllables.

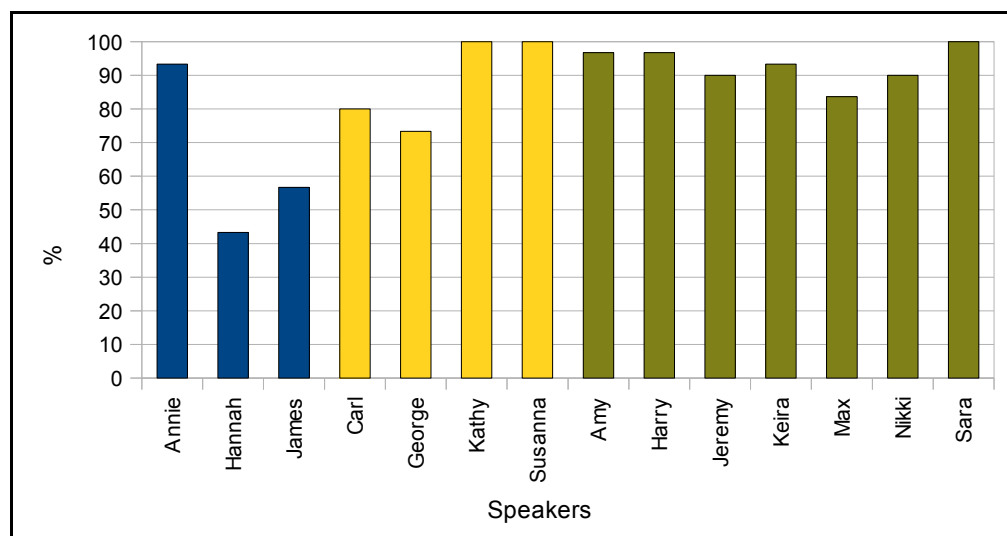


Figure 4.6.2 H Dropping: Percentage use of [h] for each individual speaker. (First generation = blue, second generation = yellow, third generation = green)

Figure 4.6.2 illustrates that H Dropping is a feature that is disappearing in Northampton. While first-generation speakers James and Hannah both represent the traditional loss of /h/ in Northampton, Annie has a high use of the ‘new’ variant [h]. Although Ø is still present in the second generation, the use of /h/ has risen to more than 70% with all the four informants. The two women, Kathy and Susanna, already use the standard variant in 100% of the instances. Among the third generation, H Dropping in stressed syllables is definitely on its way out. While Sara already pronounces all the tokens with [h], the other informants have increased their use to more than 80% as well. Interestingly, Max, who is leading the change with many other variables, still shows the least use of the standard variant [h].

On average, although Hannah realises most of the tokens as Ø, the women tend to have a slightly higher frequency of [h] than the men.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

This chapter aims to bring together the findings presented in chapter 4 and the question of whether or not features associated with Estuary English have indeed spread geographically to Northampton and its surrounding area. If so, are these features more distinctive in the youngest generation's speech than in their parents' or grandparents'? And, most importantly, why and when might the change have been initiated in the first place?

### **5.1 The result in relation to apparent-time**

Age is the only social variable that can indicate linguistic change in a community under investigation, and apparent-time studies can help to investigate a change in individual variables. They may, additionally, help to make conclusions about the chronological order in which new features have entered the speech community. On the individual level, a variant might occasionally occur in the speech of the oldest generation and increase with the second-generation speakers, whose use of it is exceeded again by the informants of the third generation, where it is nearing completion. Chambers notes that this process reflects three stages, namely 'initial stasis', 'rapid rise', and 'tailing off', though not all stages can always be covered in a linguistic study (2002:361).

This section will look at the results presented in chapter 4 and draw a conclusion about the conventional variants of the variables under investigation around the years 1890, 1945, 1970, and today, and how the variants entered the Northampton accent chronologically. In addition, it will draw a diachronic comparison to the traditional Northampton accent as represented by the informants of the Survey of English Dialects outlined in section 2.3.3. It has been indicated earlier that a diachronic comparison between the SED and the apparent-time material gathered in this study has some disadvantages. The SED informants were rural, male, working-class speakers that did not have the same possibilities for social mobility as the informants of this project. Especially the youngest generation is considered to be socially mobile due to their educational background. Today's young adults have better access to higher education than their parents and grandparents did. Six out of seven third-generation informants in this study were university students, and the seventh a student at a local college. Furthermore, the interviews from the 1950s were conducted in a small village five miles outside the town centre and thus the informants did not belong to exactly the same community. However, two of the second-generation informants in my sample grew up in a village 1.5 miles away from

Kislingbury, and one third-generation speaker lived about three miles away from the SED location. It should be noted here that within the limited scope of a master's thesis, one has to work with the material obtainable and the SED, to my knowledge, supplies the only empirical evidence of Northampton speech available.

The SED informants were about 80 years old and were born around 1875. Consequently, they represented the speech of Northampton around 1890. The oldest generation of this study was born between 1928 and 1933. Their speech can be seen as characteristic for the time around 1945. The second-generation informants represent the local accent of the early 1970s, the time Northampton experienced great migration from overspill Londoners. The youngest generation was born around 1990, and they represent the present time, with extensive social and geographical mobility and the resulting levelling of accents. Consequently, their speech was expected to show most features associated with EE.

If we look at the quantified data presented in chapter 4, we notice that the youngest generation has indeed greater use of EE features than any other of the investigated informant groups. Table 5.1 demonstrates an overview of the conventional Northampton variants at specific points in time throughout the last 120 years.

Table 5.1 Percentage scores of Northampton variants around 1890, 1945, 1970, and 2010

<b>Variants</b>	<b>1890*</b>	<b>1945</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>2010</b>
[ʊ]	[ɪ]	63%	69%	83%
[tʃ,dʒ]	[t,d]	32%	79%	89%
[ʔ] intervocalic word- finally	[t]	9%	41%	88%
[ʔ] intervocalic word- medially	[t]	0%	6%	59%
[f,v]	[θ,ð]	0%	0%	26%
[h]	Ø	64%	88%	93%

\* For the SED, only the traditional variant is given. There were no percentage scores available.

Table 5.1 combines the results presented in chapter 4 with the apparent-time factor and thus allows for statements about a chronological change in the speech of the informants. The following description will look at the first five variables listed in the table, while H Dropping will be treated separately. [h]-loss is a working-class feature and is not expected in the speech of the socially mobile third-generation students. It is rather treated as a counter-movement towards a more standard pronunciation that occurred parallel to the other changes.

The variable that seems to have first been subject to a change in Northampton is L Vocalisation. The quantified data for this variable illustrate that the oldest generation had already crossed the 50% mark on both the group level and the individual level in their use of the vocalised variant. The feature seems to be already firmly established in Northampton speech and must have been present for quite some time. The comparison with the SED material shows that the traditional Northampton variant was dark [ɫ] around 1890, which means that there were two generations between the SED informants and the first-generation speakers of this investigation that could have initiated the change. In Chamber's terms, L Vocalisation must already have reached the second stage of a rapid rise around 1945, 'tailing off towards a new stable state' in the speech of the two youngest generations (Chambers 2002:362). We can thus conclude that L Vocalisation in Northampton must have been introduced before the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The variable that seems to have been affected next is (tj,dj), although it has to be kept in mind that there were some irregularities with Yod words. Annie, for example, varied extremely in the different interview styles. She used [tʃ] and [ðʒ] in connected speech, viz. in the interview style and the reading style, while she used both the RP variants /tj/ and /dj/ as well as Yod Dropping in the elicitation task, where the words were uttered in isolation. James exclusively used Yod Dropping in words with primary stress and the coalesced variant in words with secondary stress, while Hannah produced only two tokens of (tj,dj). In general, it was not possible to elicit 30 tokens per speaker for (tj,dj) and the results may, therefore, be interpreted as tendencies rather than general statements about Northampton speech.

As indicated several times before, Yod Coalescence has long been a part of the English language and can, in unstressed syllables, frequently be found in standard pronunciation. In stressed syllables it seems to have entered Northampton speech around 1945, though the frequency of syllables with primary stress among the oldest informants was still relatively low. The high percentage score of [tʃ,ðʒ] in the second generation supports the assumption that Yod Coalescence is chronologically following L Vocalisation. Despite the few tokens for (tj,dj)

it appears that, today, the feature is well-established in the Northampton accent. The development outlined here may be supported by Cruttenden, who indicates that Yod Coalescence in stressed syllables has begun to enter General RP at roughly the same time, where it is now a well-established feature as well (2008:80-81).<sup>13</sup>

The variable chronologically following (tj,dj) in Northampton seems to be intervocalic T Glottalling in word-final position. The data demonstrated in section 4.3 show a clear pattern for the use of [ʔ] for (t) in intervocalic word-final position in Northampton, observable both in the group scores and the individual scores. While the glottal stop is a minor variant in the speech of the oldest speakers, it occurs more frequently in the second generation, and increases further among the youngest speakers. As with Yod Coalescence, the use of the new variant has increased rapidly since the 1970s, although [ʔ] was already present in the speech of Hannah and Annie. Annie had only 7% frequency of a glottal stop, which equals two tokens and may not be seen as representative of her speech. Hannah, however, realised six tokens out of 30 as [ʔ], and the question arises why she had a more advanced use of glottal stops than James and Annie. An explanation for this may be given when we look at accent levelling in section 5.2.<sup>14</sup>

The extremely high percentages of the glottalised variant among the third-generation speakers support Fabricius' statement that the glottal stop has lost its stigma in this environment. While their parents were still more careful in their use of a glottal stop, the youngest speakers all showed a high frequency of T Glottalling in word-final intervocalic position, where the change is nearing completion.

Intervocalic T Glottalling in word-medial position is still widely stigmatised and has not yet been regarded as a feature of EE. However, it is a feature that has found its way into Northampton speech, where it is used quite frequently by the youngest informants. From a chronological point of view, it must have entered the accent after intervocalic T Glottalling word-finally. It is non-existent in the speech of the oldest informants, but appears occasionally among their 'children'. The youngest generation has already crossed the 50% mark. Even more, [ʔ] is used by each speaker of the third generation. In contrast to the variables described above, the initial stage of intervocalic T Glottalling word-medially occurred in the second generation. The third-generation informants represent the stage of a rapid rise, from 6% to 59% respectively. The third stage, a tailing-off towards a new stable variant, seems not to have

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<sup>13</sup> Gimson's definition of General RP excludes RP as spoken by the upper-class as well as Regional RP, which 'reflects regional rather than class variation' (2008:78).

<sup>14</sup> We should keep in mind that the assumption is that speakers do not change their accent after the critical period (see 2.1.3), though later modifications of an adult speaker's speech cannot be excluded with 100% certainty.

occurred in Northampton speech yet.

Altendorf reports that the diachronic principle of Estuary English is: ‘**the less stigmati[s]ed variant first, the more stigmati[s]ed variant later**’, and that ‘[a]fter intervocalic T Glottalling, TH Fronting is now the next possible “candidate” in this group of London stereotypes’ (2003:152, original emphasis).<sup>15</sup> Her statement is supported by the data of this study. In Northampton, TH Fronting has developed subsequent to intervocalic T Glottalling word-medially. It is exclusively present in the youngest informants’ speech, though its social stigmatisation is still reflected by the great individual variation in the use of the labiodental fricatives among the speakers. However, since five out of seven informants showed some degree of TH Fronting, this variable cannot be ignored in the discussion about the Northampton accent. It seems that the current status of TH Fronting in Northampton reflects the initial stage of linguistic change described by Chambers (2002).

The chronological order of linguistic changes in Northampton can be illustrated as follows: L Vocalisation→ Yod Coalescence→ intervocalic T Glottalling word-finally→ intervocalic T Glottalling word-medially→ TH Fronting.

As indicated earlier, the variable (h) is treated separately in this discussion. This decision was made because, in contrast to the features discussed above, the pronunciation of [h] is a change towards standard pronunciation rather than a non-standard one. It was not expected in the speech of the socially mobile university students, and has indeed been radically decreasing across the three generations. The youngest generation used [h] in 93% of all the instances, and in an /h/-dropping area like Northampton, the use of [h] may function as a tool for distancing themselves from the traditional working-class image associated with this feature. The gradual decrease of [h] illustrated in Figure 4.6.1 in a way also reflects the growing access to higher education and social mobility. While the oldest informants were more or less confined to manual jobs, their grandchildren easily have access to university and are more geographically and socially mobile. A trend towards adaptation of [h] in stressed syllables, so-called *h-restoration*, has recently also been observed in the speech of teenagers from the south-east and London (see for example Cheshire et al. 1999, Williams & Kerswill 1999, Cheshire et al. 2008). More information about this phenomenon can be found in the section on accent levelling below.

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<sup>15</sup> At the same time, she considers it to be unlikely that TH Fronting will ever become one of the core variants of EE (Altendorf 2003:152).

## 5.2 The results in relation to accent levelling

Between the conduction of the Survey of English Dialects and this investigation, Northampton has experienced major social and demographic changes. It was designated a new town in 1968 and, in the following years, experienced great migration from London and the south-east. Today, the town has been transformed from a skill-based shoemaking and engineering sector to a service sector as well as a commuter town for people working in London. Both are supported by Northampton's geographical position near the M1 motorway from London to Leeds.

The quantified data described in chapter 4 and the discussion in section 5.1 show that Northampton speech, as represented by the informants of this study and the Survey of English Dialects, has experienced a change of consonantal features originating from south-eastern England and, consequently, a decrease of the traditional local variants. An explanation for the spread of the features investigated may therefore be sought in the growing social and geographical mobility of people living in Northampton. The assumption is that the features investigated in this study are a result of accent levelling initiated through face-to-face contact with overspill Londoners and other southerners. Accent levelling has previously been described as 'a process whereby differences between regional varieties are reduced, features which make varieties distinctive disappear, and new features emerge and are adopted by speakers over a wide geographical area' (Williams & Kerswill 1999:149), and which is only possible in highly mobile communities within a relatively compact area such as a new town (Kerswill 2003:239). The subsequent discussion will take this situation as the point of origin. The interpretations may, however, often be merely speculative.

Williams and Kerswill indicate that 'the form [levelling] takes and the mechanisms by which it operates will differ according to local demographic and social factors' (1999:151). In their study of the new town Milton Keynes, for example, they focused on the speech of the town's first-generation migrants and their children. The latter had either been born in the location or had moved into the town at a young age. Williams and Kerswill also interviewed older local speakers and, additionally, consulted the findings of a nearby SED location. The researchers found that the children rejected both the local variants as well as the parental variants and settled instead on other non-regional or newly innovated variants (Williams & Kerswill 1999:152-153). The rapid change was explained by a lack of close social ties between the older and the younger generations. Because the subjects had migrated to the town, their social networks were relatively loose (*ibid.*). The Milton Keynes study may be seen as contrastive to this study and is described in order to illustrate demographic and social factors



characteristic for Northampton.

Since most of the informants have lived in Northampton for several generations, the informants of the present research project, in contrast to the Milton Keynes study, can be assumed to have relatively strong local ties. Nevertheless, the area has been subject to increased immigration from speakers of London English. While the oldest generation's speech in this study was more or less unaffected by the mixing of the population, it must have had a great impact on their children. The second-generation informants were between 50 and 56 years old and, consequently, represented the speech in Northampton in the early 1970s. This was exactly the time when Northampton was designated a new town and 'Northamptonians' came into face-to-face contact with people originally from London. The second-generation informants were around the age of fifteen at that time, an age where they are most susceptible to linguistic innovations. Furthermore, they grew up at a time in which the shoe and the engineering industry in Northampton was in decline, being replaced by the distributional sector. In the years following the development of the new town, big distributors such as Avon cosmetics and Coca-Cola found their way to Northampton as well. These changes in the structure of Northampton and its surrounding area might have been a reason for the then young second generation to distinguish themselves also linguistically from the older generation.

In section 5.1 we noted that L Vocalisation was already firmly established in Northampton speech and, consequently, cannot be a result of the accent levelling caused by face-to-face contact with overspill Londoners in the early 1970s. Whether the feature is a result of earlier accent levelling in Northampton, 'language missionaries' who left Northampton and then returned (Steinsholt, cited in Trudgill 1986:56), or language-internal processes (for 'ease of articulation' see Lutz, cited in Altendorf 2003:144-145) can, unfortunately, not be answered within the scope of this investigation. What can be interpreted from the quantified data is that, although the group scores indicate an increase in the use of the vocalised variant, the individual scores present a rather homogeneous distribution of [ʊ] among the speakers belonging to the same families. The overall use of L Vocalisation in Northampton speech appears to be nearing completion, and does not seem to be a feature expressing modernity or trendiness. The youth apparently does not use this feature in order to differentiate themselves from their parents and grandparents linguistically.

The situation is somewhat different with Yod Coalescence and intervocalic T Glottalling word-finally. Both variants, [tʃ, dʒ] and [ʔ], appear to have been introduced into Northampton speech at roughly the same time, though the exact order in which the variants began to spread

cannot be inferred from the data. The assumption is however that, due to the higher group scores as well as gender differences (see 5.3 below), the coalescence of (tj,dj) might have occurred a bit earlier than T Glottalling. From Table 5.1 we can conclude that both variants were in their initial stages around 1945. Consequently, they have not been introduced to Northampton through immigration in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and explanations have to be sought elsewhere.

As indicated above, first-generation informant James exclusively used the coalesced variant in Yod words with secondary stress and Annie used [tʃ] and [ðʒ] in connected speech, viz. in the interview style and the reading style. Where words were uttered in isolation, she used both the RP variants /tj/ and /dj/ as well as Yod Dropping. Altendorf (2003) reports that the use of the coalesced variants sounds more ‘informal’ and ‘nonchalant’. In Yod Dropping areas it can, therefore, be a convenient ‘alternative’ with which the speakers try to dissociate themselves from the traditional speech usually representing the working-class (2003:154). The use of the coalesced variants has been increasing radically since the 1970s, and it has been indicated in the discussion above that the two younger generations reflect the stages of a rapid rise and a tailing-off in a change in process. As with Yod Coalescence, the use of the [ʔ] word-finally was already present in the speech of Hannah and Annie, increased rapidly in the 1970s, and has almost reached completion with the youngest speakers. Today, [ʔ] in this environment seems to be the new stable variant in Northampton and its gradual distribution is observable both in the group scores and the individual scores.

However, for the discussion of accent levelling regarding intervocalic T Glottalling word-finally as well as Yod Coalescence, the first-generation speakers Annie, Hannah, and James seem to be the most important informants, and a possible explanation for a variation might be sought in Northampton’s demographic situation around 1945. During the Second World War Northampton accommodated both evacuees (Brown 1990:149) and soldiers.<sup>16</sup> The latter instance might be especially interesting in Hannah’s case. Hannah spent a lot of her childhood in hospital, where she came into contact with those soldiers, who used to play with the children and entertain them. As a consequence of this encounter, Hannah might have been influenced by their speech. James and Annie, in contrast, could have been influenced by evacuees who had Yod Coalescence and T Glottalling already internalised. James, for example, told me that he worked together with an evacuee from East London, whose Cockney dialect he admired, and Annie, who worked at a local shop, might also have come into contact with

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<sup>16</sup> This information is anecdotal, given to me during one of the interviews.

speakers of other accents. These assumptions are, however, highly speculative since I don't have any statistical evidence about the number of evacuees or soldiers in Northampton during World War II.

The variable chronologically following intervocalic T Glottalling word-finally is the glottal stop in word-medial position. The quantified data for glottalisation word-medially allow for more concrete statements about its development in Northampton than in the variable described above. The discussion in section 5.1 illustrates that the use of a glottal stop in this environment must have started in the early 1970s, though the second-generation informants still show a rather low frequency of [ʔ]. In Chamber's terms, this reflects the initial stasis of a linguistic change in progress, which is followed by the rapid rise in the third generation, namely an increase from 6% usage of a glottal stop to 59%. The use of a glottal stop among the second-generation informants can be interpreted as a result of accent levelling caused by the high numbers of overspill Londoners coming to Northampton in the early 1970s. Demographic changes, loosening of social networks, and face-to-face contact with people already having the glottal stop internalised in their speech may have advanced a change in the pronunciation of [ʔ] in word-medial intervocalic position. In contrast to the glottalisation of (t) in word-final position discussed above, T Glottalling in intervocalic word-medial position is still stigmatised. It is considered more a boundary marker between EE and Cockney than an EE feature, though it is a feature spreading rapidly across the country.

The same applies for the variable (th,dh). As indicated earlier, TH Fronting has been reported to have been spreading throughout England and all the way to Scotland. The data presented in chapter 4 show that TH Fronting has also reached Northampton, being pronounced in 26% of the cases by the youngest speakers. The feature was non-existent in the speech of the first- and second-generation speakers, and the data do, unfortunately, not cover the period between the 1970s and the early 1990s. Consequently, we assume that the quantified data in this study indicate the initial stage of a linguistic change in progress, and how it will proceed in Northampton has to be followed up in the future.

However, it should not be ignored that TH Fronting in Northampton seems not to have resulted directly from immigration in the 1970s. The feature is exclusively present with speakers born in the early 1990s. Trudgill reports of a similar unexpected change in the use of the dental fricatives in Norwich. Of his informants born before 1958, no-one used the labiodental fricatives at all, while 70% of the informants born between 1959 and 1973 showed some degree of TH Fronting (2002:57). He further states that the rapid spread across England

began in the 1980s and 1990s (Trudgill 1999:137), and this statement can also be reinforced by the data of the youngest age group in this study.

Trudgill (2002) ascribes the rapid spread of TH Fronting partly to geographical diffusion and partly to attitudinal factors. The former is supported by the fact that this traditionally London feature first affects areas closer to the metropolis, where people are still in face-to-face contact with speakers who have this feature, before it spreads into areas further away. The reason for the dental fricatives spreading so rapidly, Trudgill sees in people's attitudes, which are partly influenced by the media (2002:57). Williams and Kerswill, in an attempt to explain the spread of the non-standard southern variants [f,v] and [ʔ] in areas far away from London and the south-east, namely Hull, labelled these features 'youth norms', widely used in television and radio, and associated with 'youth culture' (1999:162). In contrast to those informants interviewed by Williams and Kerswill, young speakers in Northampton have had contact with London speakers for several decades, and it is at least likely that the main source for a change in (th,dh) is face-to-face contact with speakers from the capital.

In section 5.1, it was noted that a trend has recently been observed in London teenage speech towards h-restoration, especially led by non-Anglo females (Cheshire et al. 2008:15). London's working-class accent is further claimed to be extremely influential (Wells 1982:301) and also the features associated with Estuary English are characteristically vernacular London English features. Consequently, it might be assumed that the loss of H Dropping is another feature spreading from London to the surrounding areas.

Accent levelling has earlier been reported to occur in highly mobile communities, and although Northampton is both a new town and a commuter town for people working in London, there has not been enough recent in-migration from speakers of London English to support the theory that h-restoration could be a result of levelling. A change towards h-restoration in London has only been observed in the speech of teenagers, who were of the same age as the informants of this study and, consequently, is a newly introduced feature in London English as well. Furthermore, it is rather unlikely that the younger generation comes into face-to-face contact with London English speakers as a result of commuting. A more plausible explanation might rather be that they meet Estuary English speakers and speakers of other non H Dropping accents at the university, though I have not investigated this aspect further.

In a traditional H Dropping area like the one under investigation, h-restoration might also be used in order to avoid the image of primitivism and uneducated working-class speech

still sticking to the feature. H Dropping is a salient feature and people are extremely aware of the stigma still attached to Ø (cf. Upton & Widdowson 2006:59, Altendorf 2003:80).

### 5.3 Results in relation to gender

Gender was not part of the original selection criteria, but the data described above nevertheless allow for some statements about gender differences in the speech of the informants. It should, however, be kept in mind that there is only one male first-generation speaker in the sample, and it is difficult to make generalisations about males' speech in general based on one single person.

For the first variable under investigation, L Vocalisation, there appears indeed to be a systematic gender difference in the two oldest generations, in which the male informants tend to use more of the vocalised variant [ʊ] than the female informants. In the third generation the variants are more evenly distributed among the male and the female speakers, and a systematic difference in the use of [ʊ] and [ɪ] is no longer evident.

L Vocalisation was a traditionally stigmatised feature and the preference of [ʊ] for pre-pausal and pre-consonantal /l/ by the first- and second-generation men is in line with Labov's criterion I on gender preferences outlined in section 2.1.2. Today, [ʊ] in this environment has generally lost its stigma and has even entered RP. This development is also reflected in the speech of the youngest informants, where the use is not noticeably different between males and females.

For the variable (tj,dj), the highest scores for coalescence are produced by the women, and this is observable in all three age groups. First-generation speaker Annie uses Yod Coalescence in more than 40% of the cases, and is thus leading in the use of [tʃ,dʒ] in her group, while James uses just over 30% of the coalesced variants in syllables with secondary stress. Hannah will not be given too much attention with this variable because she only produced two tokens for (tj,dj), and it is therefore difficult to make any generalisations about her speech.

The fact that the women of the sample prefer the coalesced variant becomes most obvious in the second and third generations, where altogether four out of six female speakers show 100% use of Yod Coalescence. The use of [tʃ,dʒ] is supported by Labov's criterion II that women use more of the incoming variants than men. Milroy and Gordon further state that

women create prestige variants rather than simply favour them (see section 2.1.2). Since Yod Coalescence is one of the core variants associated with Estuary English, and hence spoken by the middle-class, it can be argued that [tʃ,dʒ] is by now also a prestige variant in the Northampton accent.

It was described earlier that women tend to prefer supra-local variants such as the glottal stop and it was expected that the women would be leading in the use of intervocalic T Glottalling in word-final position. The quantified data indeed reveal a slight dominance by the women in the use of the glottal stop. While first-generation speaker James produces no glottal stops at all, the two women of the oldest generation on average use [ʔ] in 13% of the instances. This pattern is repeated in both the second and the third generation, where the females on average use more glottal stops than the males. The difference is however too slight to be regarded as significant here. In general, it can be concluded that there are no representative gender differences among the speakers of the sample in their use of a glottal stop for (t) in intervocalic word-final position.

In the quantified data we can, however, observe that the men tend to use [ʔ] more often than the women when it comes to the more stigmatised word-medial position. The use of a glottal stop starts in the second generation, where it is still very subtle, and only one single token is realised as a glottal stop by a female speaker. The use of the glottal variant has then increased radically among the youngest age group, though [ʔ] is still used more often by the male speakers of the third-generation sample. Since the general opinion is that men prefer more vernacular variants, one would expect the women to use more of the incoming variant [ʔ]. However, in intervocalic word-medial position, the glottal stop is still considered a Cockney rather than an Estuary English feature, and, as is known, it is typically the men who prefer working-class features. Nevertheless, the female speakers on average use [ʔ] in more than 50% of the instances, and it seems to be more and more accepted among all the young speakers.

TH Fronting, though non-existent in the two oldest generations, is another feature that is used more often by the male speakers in this investigation than by the females. Harry uses the dental fricatives throughout, followed by Jeremy, who realises half of the tokens as [f,v]. Two of the four girls at least show some degree of TH Fronting, though it has been indicated in chapter 4 that Nikki during the interview used more of the voiced variant. TH Fronting is a salient feature (Trudgill 2002:57), and it seems plausible that the male speakers consciously use this traditionally stigmatised working-class feature. What is striking in the data at hand is that Max, who is almost always leading in the use of the non-standard variants, shows very

little use of TH Fronting. His speech will be commented on in more detail in section 5.4.

The last variable under investigation is H Dropping, and an increase in the use of [h] in stressed syllables is seen as a counter-movement to the increase of the more supra-local London vernacular variants. Ø for (h) in stressed syllables is not an Estuary English feature and speakers are rather expected to avoid this traditionally working-class feature.

The quantified data for (h) reveal that, although first-generation Hannah realises more than half of the tokens as Ø, the women of the sample in general tend to use slightly more of the standard variant [h] than the men. The difference is, however, very subtle. There is no clear pattern observable in the use of [h] and Ø for (h) in stressed syllables and it was rather unexpected that there is no significant gender difference reflected in the sample.

## 5.4 Other remarks

This section will take a closer look at third-generation informant Max, whose speech shows some interesting characteristics in relation to the other third-generation informants. Throughout the results chapter it has become clear that Max is often leading the use of non-standard features. He produces most variants of L Vocalisation, intervocalic T Glottalling word-finally and word-medially, as well as of traditional H Dropping. With Yod Coalescence, he is even a step ahead of his fellow informants, using ST Palatalisation in *stu*-clusters instead. Altendorf (2003) clearly associates this feature with Estuary English. At the same time, Max shows very low frequency (3%) of the most stigmatised feature TH Fronting, a variant that is currently spreading in Northampton.

As indicated in Table 3.2, Max lives in Wellingborough, another town about 12 miles to the east of Northampton. His paternal family has lived in the same area for at least two generations, while his maternal grandparents come from another town further south. They moved to a village near Wellingborough when Max's mother was born. Though today joined on to Northampton and the Eastern District, Wellingborough is still an independent borough. Before he started studying at the University of Northampton, Max rarely had any contact with the town and its inhabitants and it may be argued that this is the reason for his linguistic situation. Throughout the interview it became clear that Max is the one informant that identifies himself least with Northampton.

In general, Max is the most advanced speaker when it comes to the non-standard features, including the supra-local Estuary English features. The fact that he shows a very low

frequency of TH Fronting may be an indicator for the geographical spread of this variable. Trudgill partly ascribes the increase of TH Fronting to geographical diffusion (2002:57), and it was stated earlier that features spread from a dominant centre into the surrounding area in a wave-like movement, thereby affecting other cities and towns first. Northampton is a much bigger town than Wellingborough, which, according to the Census 2001, had 72,519 inhabitants (Office for National Statistics 2011b) at the beginning of the new millennium as opposed to Northampton's 194,458 (see 2.3.1). Since TH Fronting is also the last variable that has entered Northampton and is currently spreading there, Max's low frequency of TH Fronting indicates that this feature has reached Wellingborough as well, but that it is not as widespread there as it is in Northampton. In general, by using the supra-local features described above and by simultaneously sticking to the most characteristic local feature H Dropping, Max can negotiate between showing loyalty to his place of origin and the wish to sound more modern.



## 6. CONCLUSION

Like Milton Keynes and many other south-eastern conurbations, Northampton is yet another town that can be aligned to those affected by the rapid spread of both Estuary English and even broader vernacular London English features. The analysis of the variables outlined in chapter 3 has shown that features associated with this phenomenon have indeed spread geographically to Northampton and the surrounding area. Furthermore, it has confirmed the assumption that these features are most frequent with the youngest generation. The discussion has also revealed that accent levelling resulting from the designation as a new town was not necessarily the trigger for a spread of the variables studied in Northampton. In fact the opposite is the case, namely that the only features not associated with Estuary English, but regarded as boundary markers, entered Northampton speech after the designation in 1968.

In section 5.1 we established the chronological order in which the variables under investigation seem to have entered Northampton. On the basis of the apparent-time discussion, we looked at the variables being subject to potential accent levelling resulting from face-to-face contact with overspill Londoners in the 1970s. These discussions allow for two main conclusions:

1. Those variants that are seen as core variants of EE, namely L Vocalisation, Yod Coalescence, and intervocalic T Glottalling word-finally appear to have found their way into the accent before the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and thus before the massive influx of overspill Londoners in the early 1970s. The assumption is then that both Yod Coalescence and intervocalic T Glottalling might have been introduced into Northampton through evacuees and soldiers during the Second World War, while L Vocalisation must have entered the speech community even earlier. It has, additionally, been indicated that L Vocalisation in the Northampton accent could also have been triggered by language-internal factors such as ‘ease of articulation’.
2. The only features that were unambiguously introduced into Northampton, presumably as a result of accent levelling after its designation as a new town, are intervocalic T Glottalling word-medially and TH Fronting, variables still regarded as boundary markers between EE and the Cockney accent. We assumed that, especially with T Glottalling, the less stigmatised variant is later followed by the more stigmatised variant, and that it is likely to be followed by TH Fronting (cf. Altendorf 2003:152). Thus, intervocalic T Glottalling word-finally probably had a pioneering function, paving

the way for the marked word-medial position, which again had the same function for TH Fronting. This theory is further supported by the fact that the latter feature did not appear immediately after the first rush of immigrants, but rather started in the 1990s. This is exactly the same time at which, according to Trudgill, the rapid rise of TH Fronting started across Britain (see section 5.2). A potential initiation of the labiodental fricatives for (th,dh) in the 1980s can, unfortunately, not be investigated on the basis of the data at hand.

In light of this study it can be concluded that there are great differences between the speech of Northampton today and the speech recorded 40 years ago. The Survey of English Dialects can, at least for the consonantal features investigated, no longer be seen as the only representative of the Northampton area. Instead, the changes reported here will also have to be taken into consideration when talking about the Northampton accent in the future.

When it comes to gender, we saw that the differences between men and women were particularly obvious with the two most stigmatised, non Estuary English, features TH Fronting and intervocalic T Glottalling word-medially. The men of the two youngest age groups are clearly leading the use of the non-standard variants, though the women of the third generation already use a glottal stop in intervocalic word-medial position in more than 50% of the instances. This indicates that [ʔ] in this environment is already widely accepted among the youngest generation. TH Fronting has not yet achieved the same status among the female speakers.

With the other variables, significant gender differences were only found in the use of L Vocalisation, a formerly stigmatised variant. Among the two oldest generations, the men still show a higher frequency of the vocalised variant than the women. Today, [ʊ] for pre-pausal and pre-consonantal /l/ has lost its stigma, which is reflected in the use of L Vocalisation among the youngest speakers.

Knowing that Northampton lies in a transition area between the linguistic north and the south, it can be argued that, by using consonantal features originating in London and the south-east, Northampton speakers now identify themselves as southerners.

## **6.1 Shortcomings**

The present investigation's main aim was to research the geographical spread of features associated with Estuary English, and, in the course of the process, the Cockney features intervocalic T Glottalling in word-medial position and TH Fronting were added as well. Since there was so little information about the accent spoken in Northampton, I decided to interview people who have lived in the area for several generations. On the one hand, this turned out to be a good starting point for a chronological investigation of the variables under investigation. On the other hand, it limited the opportunities to include other social variables as well. Estuary English has been characterised as a middle-class accent, but it was not possible to find informants who have lived in Northampton for several generations and could undoubtedly be classified as middle-class speakers. The informants are instead assigned to a general social middle ground, including both upper working-class and lower middle-class. For the reader primarily interested in social aspects, the solution chosen here might seem insufficient, but a focus on social class was considered beyond the scope of this study.

Another aspect that I would have liked to comment on in more detail is the aspect of language change within one family. During the fieldwork I got the chance to interview three generations of one family from both the maternal and the paternal side. I ended up with third-generation speaker Harry, his parents George and Susanna, as well as his paternal grandparents James and Hannah and his maternal grandmother Annie. This family constituted the kernel of this investigation, providing all of the first-generation informants, and would have suited perfectly a study on family-internal language change. In the result chapter I already established an interesting similarity in the use of L Vocalisation among the male speakers of this family. At the same time, Harry is leading the use of TH Fronting with 100% frequency. This is especially interesting given the fact that all members of his family have come from Northampton for several generations. Unfortunately, a more detailed focus on family-internal language change was felt to be too far removed from the initial starting point of the thesis.

## **6.2 Further research**

In the chapters and sections above we have established that features associated with Estuary English have indeed spread out from London and the Home Counties into Northampton and its surrounding area. However, the present study is exclusively concerned with consonantal features and we do not know how vowels have developed in Northampton during the last

decades. Since vowels tend to be more regional in character, often oriented on a big city, the question arises whether vowel changes reported for London and the south-east are also valid for Northampton. With regard to Estuary English, features of interest might be a possible diphthong shift in the lexical sets of FACE, PRICE, and GOAT as well as GOAT Allophony or *happy* Tensing. Another vowel feature that has been reported to be spreading across south-eastern English, and which could be heard among the third-generation speakers as well, is GOOSE Fronting.

When thinking about vowels characteristic of the traditional Northampton accent, I may propose further research into the vowels of the lexical sets STRUT and MOUTH. It was mentioned earlier that Northampton lies in a transition area between the linguistic north and the south. This becomes especially apparent in STRUT words, which traditionally can have both a short open central vowel [ʌ] or a short close-mid back vowel [ʊ] in Northampton. The MOUTH diphthong, according to the SED, starts with an open-mid front vowel [ɛ], where RP has an open front vowel [a]. In London, the starting point in MOUTH words appears to have recently become subject to raising towards [æʊ]. The traditional Northampton variants were heard in the speech of the two oldest age groups, though I did not recognise these variants in the speech of the youngest informants any longer. Since these two variables have such characteristic local realisations, a change in the lexical sets STRUT and MOUTH might be especially interesting to study also in relation to *identity*.

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## APPENDIX

### A. Raw data for all speakers

#### First generation

informants	L Vocalization		Yod		T Glottalling		Intervocalic		TH Fronting		H Dropping	
	Coalescence		Word-finally		T Glottalling		TH Fronting		H Dropping			
	u	ɪ	tʃ, dʒ	others	ʔ	t	ʔ	t	f, v	θ, ð	h	ø
Annie	18	12	3	4	2	28	0	20	0	30	28	2
James	23	7	4	9	0	30	0	30	0	30	17	13
Hannah	16	14	0	2	6	24	0	30	0	30	13	17
Σ	57	33	7	15	8	82	0	80	0	90	58	32

#### Second generation

informants	L Vocalization		Yod		T Glottalling		Intervocalic		TH Fronting		H Dropping	
	Coalescence		Word-finally		T Glottalling		TH Fronting		H Dropping			
	u	ɪ	tʃ, dʒ	others	ʔ	t	ʔ	t	f, v	θ, ð	h	ø
Carl	26	4	13	1	7	23	2	28	0	30	24	6
George	22	8	1	5	17	13	4	26	0	30	22	8
Kathy	14	16	6	2	9	21	0	30	0	30	30	0
Susanna	21	9	10	0	16	14	1	29	0	30	30	0
Σ	83	37	30	8	49	71	7	113	0	120	106	14

### Third generation

informants	L Vocalization		Yod Coalescence		T Glottalling Word-finally		Intervocalic T Glottalling		TH Fronting		H Dropping	
	ʊ	ɪ	tʃ, dʒ	others	ʔ	t	ʔ	t	f, v	θ, ð	h	ø
Amy	25	5	9	0	26	4	14	16	0	30	29	1
Harry	22	8	6	2	23	7	5	12	30	0	29	1
Jeremy	26	4	4	1	20	4	22	8	15	15	27	3
Keira	21	9	18	0	25	5	18	12	2	28	28	2
Max	28	2	13	3	29	1	24	6	2	28	26	4
Nikki	27	3	9	0	28	2	18	12	6	24	27	3
Sara	25	5	6	2	28	2	5	7	0	30	30	0
Σ	174	36	65	8	179	25	106	73	55	155	196	14